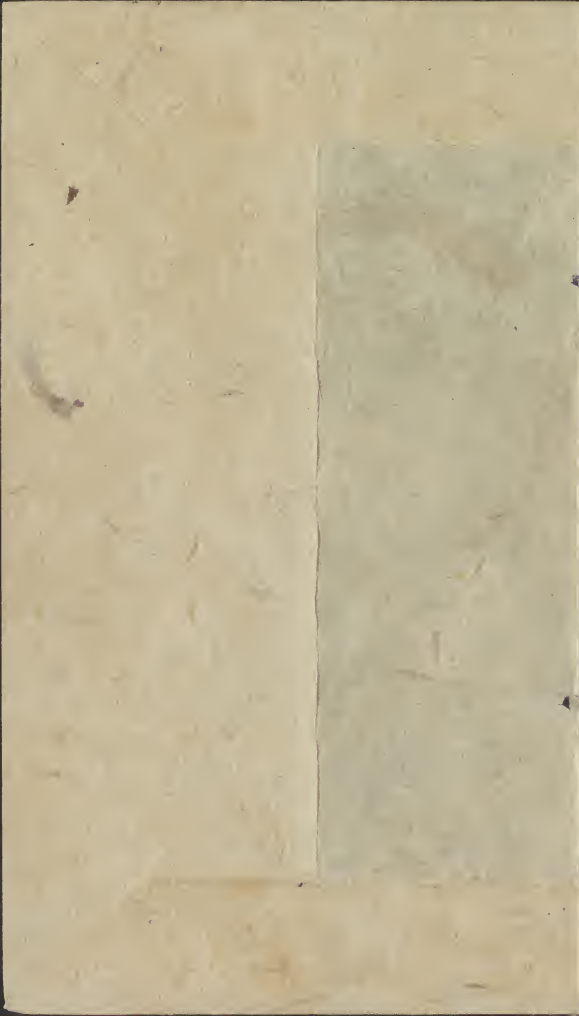


Document A

Biography of  
Late: Rev. C. E. REAGAN  
THARCHIN

Print Type Set in —  
From Chap. I to XVII



## CHAPTER ONE

### EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PREPARATION.

"But the Lord said unto him ... he is a chosen vessel unto me. . ."

Acts 9:15

As in a swinging cradle, moving back and forth in a pendulumlike motion, lies a sweet baby peacefully resting upon a pillow, so lies the lovely little village of Poo, calm and quiet, serenely nestled among majestically high and holy mountains of the great Himalayas. The village is surrounded by grass-covered hills on which one can watch with wonder sheep and goats, horses, yaks and donkeys grazing slowly and leisurely unmindful of the din of the world. The high and narrow peaks, cut through and through, deeper and deeper, by the swift-flowing streams exhibit unique attracting power of their own. In the adjacent vicinity moving at a normal speed runs the river Sutlej looking wild since it is bordered by huge boulders and imperious dense forests. The east to south direction of the mighty river wending its course to the west lends zigzag beauty to its charming natural grandeur. The occasional vista of clusters of rhododendrons and orchids make the entire landscape look like a sparkling garden. Everywhere mushrooms bedeck the land with umbrella-like shapes and forms. They are a delicious dish, surely, for a midday meal.



Far out at a distance at the lofty elevation one can gaze at the august and auspicious snow-clad tops of the mountains gleaming white under the glaze of the noonday sun. They shine princely pink beneath the full-moon night as though joyfully beckoning the poets and philosophers to the heights of yonder imagination and creative inspiration. The vast stretches of pine trees only paint the picture of unbroken continuity of nature's awe-inspiring miracle in the long ranges of the gigantic Himalayas. The Neoza fruit, a kind of nut which is specially tasty to the palate of the wandering children is found everywhere. The product is commercially a valuable commodity. No wonder then, the obscure village of Poo situated at the altitude of approximately 9000 ft. asserts its own claim.

"A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." (1)

Round about the village farms and fields are scattered and strewn all over where the humble folk of the locality cultivate barley and wheat, Phapar (2) and peas which supply the staple food of the populace. In the orchards luscious fruits such as apricots, grapes, peaches and wild berries are

(1) Mat, 5:14

(2) Buckwheat:— Roughly it is sown in the month of June and harvested in the month of September or October. This grain is ground into powder and baked into a bread. It is also used in other food preparations. Sometimes it is consumed as animal fodder by milch cows.



grown in great profusion. The apple gardens, originally planted by the Christian missionaries, have stood the test of time thriving over the years yielding their own quota to the agricultural and horticultural production of the area. Potatoes, also first introduced by the western missionaries, are perennially cultivated being appreciated by the people for the high food-value in carbohydrates.

Most of the cultivation is carried on during the summer months as during the winter the knee-deep snow prevents any productive agricultural activity. However, during the spell of leisure profitable activities such as spinning and weaving are continued because the chilly season affords no other economic activity. This implies that the children are relieved of the domestic labour to attend the Mission School nearby to learn the rudimentary elements of language and mathematics. More often than not, the children resort to merry-making, playing upon the frozen streams, ever enjoying the snow-ball fights or building interesting figures out of the snow.

Here the lakes in the high interior become snow-bound due to extreme cold winds which elude the high tips of the Himalayas. In these cold regions the wild life of the forest roam around freely but carelessly. The sporadic sight of a wild sheep, a cautious antelope, a musk ox for medicine, a wolf or a cunning leopard catches the quick eye of a hunter impelling him to pull the trigger of his gun.

Wild grouse, perhaps a lost tribe of the quails, is spotted in plenty. This serves as the finest food but due to its religious aura, its destruction is prohibited. Even the teeming fish of the waters are not permitted to be caught being prevented by the sacred sanction about its life. Besides this, the sweet music of a cuckoo bird, the graceful flight of a sparrow, the shrewd ways of the crows and the simplicity of the doves are a welcome treat to those who appreciate the beauties of nature and its fauna and flora.

I The village of Poo, at the present, falls within the  
 I boundary of Himachal Pradesh. It stands guard on  
 I the strategic and important trade route between  
 Indian and western Tibet. It is located in Indian  
 territory almost one day's journey by foot (if one  
 walks fast) from the mountainous borders of Tibet.  
 For traders and travellers trekking this route Shipki  
 I Pass is the only gateway into Tibet. On the route  
 I the tiny village of Namgyay welcomes the weary  
 bands of travellers to spend the day or night in its  
 hospitable inns. In fact, the distance is barely  
 C twenty miles from the border but the arduous and  
 difficult terrain makes it seem of greater length.

I-I In bygone years Poo was included within the  
 I limits of Rampur-Bushair state ruled over by a  
 Hindu king named Raja Padamsingh. In this pro-  
 vince the people maintained staunch and strict caste  
 distinctions even to the point of adhering to the



prohibitions in matters of diet and dwelling places of the inferior castes. The subjects in general belonged to a Rajput race excepting the inhabitants of the northern regions who retained the dominance of Tibetan clothes, creed and culture.

Gergan Tharchin was born in the village of Poo on the eighteenth day of April in the year of 1890. (3) He was a contemporary of Sadhu Sunder Singh his friend and was younger than him by seven months and fifteen days to be exact. Tharchin's birth-date has been corroborated by his baptismal certificate which clearly declares his age to be that of two years on the day of christening. The sacrament of child-baptism was administered through the blessed hands of a godly minister, Rev. Schreve of the Moravian Mission of Germany. Tharchin claims to have this document stored up somewhere in his personal records.

Tharchin's parents came from humble peasant stock. They earned their livelihood by dint of hard labour and perspiration. These qualities, no doubt, Tharchin inherited from his parents. Both the parents were quite skilled in the manual arts of weaving, sewing and knitting which provided an additional source of extra income to meet the household expenses.

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(3) According to the Tibetan calendar this birth date is reckoned as falling within the year of Chag-Tak-Lo, i.e., Iron Tiger-Year.

I In God's good providence Tharchin's mother, a simple and a sincere woman, came in close contact with the devout Moravian missionaries from whom, for the first time, she heard about the saving gospel of Christ. After completion of the stipulated period of instruction meant for the intending disciples, mother confessed Jesus Christ as her Lord and personal Saviour, and to the glory of God both the mother and the child were baptised on the same day in the sanctuary of the Moravian church at Poo. Thereafter mother continued to be in the fellowship of the believers and also served as a nurse to look after the growing children of the missionaries. "This close vital contact with the Christian missionaries" Tharchin says, "definitely encouraged my mother to deepen her faith in Christ." After the retirement of Rev. Schreve mother still continued to assist Rev. Schnabell who, by the way, was a man of medium height, tremendous energy and restless activity: working, writing, teaching or visiting the sick and the suffering. Where there was no hospital Rev. Schnabell would personally rush to the spot, supervise the sick and dress their wounds with his own hands. Later on, he was joined by Rev. Kunick and Dr. Mark, a medical missionary.

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In the course of time and in obedience to the directions of Christ to preach and to teach, the missionaries established a primary school at Poo in order to impart secular education to the children coming

from both Christian and non-Christian backgrounds. Urdu as well as Tibetan language were taught to the pupils. When asked to convey indelible impressions of his sweet childhood days, Tharchin smiled as usual and then remarked, "The teacher was very strict. On one occasion he hit my head with the straight edge of the wooden slate. To this day the mark of that injury persists on the left side of my head. I also recall how Rev. Schnabell the missionary teacher used to enter our small, tiny classroom and teach us the Geography of India drawing our attention to the map which always hung on the wall. He would first point out the major cities of India to us. Later he would instruct us to go to the map to show the metropolitan cities of Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Madras."

Tharchin recollects the following incident very vividly. Everyday during the school interval, at about 11 O' clock, a school teacher used to send him to his (teacher's) residence to fetch the Hookah, a kind of smoking pipe very common in north India. Getting curious day by day Tharchin was tempted to try the Hookah and one day while in transit ventured to take two or three puffs presuming none had seen him smoking the pipe stealthily. This experience was repeated daily. The habit set in. He did not suspect that Rev. Schnabell had noticed his smoking the pipe not only once but several times as the missionary's bungalow was situated midway

between the teachers' quarters and the school proper.

Soon after this incident, when the joyful season of Christmas arrived all the children looked forward with great eagerness and expectation to receiving beautiful and expensive presents like toys, clothings, soap-cases, combs and mirrors. On the 24th of December every child opened his presents as soon as it was given. When Tharchin unpacked the present hoping for something great, lo and behold, to his utter amazement and disappointment, he saw several tobacco leaves in a nicely packed case. Actually the boy should have learnt the lesson of the day from this but instead of giving up smoking for good he deliberately took it up for ever. His mother tried to reason with him but all in vain. He argued with her saying, "Since tobacco is given to me as a Christmas present, therefore, there is no harm in smoking. It will have no baneful effect upon my body." The logic was clear, though half correct. The perplexed mother was found at her wit's end to refute the argument of her clever son who had already managed to turn the tables on the gimmick devised by the missionary.

I. As the increasing pressures and responsibilities of the church and school grew over the years, the Mission work required closer attention and supervision. Under these considerations, Rev. Schnabell volun-

tarily sacrificed his turn for furlough that year (1905-6) and instead to take along the entire family to Kotgargh, a place beyond Simla, for physical rest and relaxation.

Since he was interested in Tharchin spiritually he took him also with the family. Tharchin assisted in the household affairs. They lived in a rented house at a place called Thanedar located a bit above and to the north of Kotgargh. From time to time Tharchin would get opportunities to accompany Rev. Schnabell to Simla for purchasing food-stuffs and household commodities. Tharchin availed himself on these occasional visits to see the interesting sights of Simla. This opened his eyes to visualise the glories of modern civilization which otherwise was a closed page to this rural lad from an ignorant village like Poo. Reflecting on those memories Tharchin comments, "When, for the first time in my life, I saw a railway engine dashing towards my direction I got scared and ran for my life from the railway platform ... after all, nor an unusaul thing for a Tibetan to do on the first glimpse of such strange phenomena."

In Kotgargh Tharchin became acquainted with Sadhu Sunder Singh, the great Indian Christian saint and a mystic, for the first time. At that time Sunder Singh was showing the magic lantern in a meeting on a spot somewhere near the Mission station. This was sometime in the months of May-June of 1906.

During this time sad news was received regarding the passing away of Tharchin's mother. When she went to be with the Lord, she was in the prime of her youth being thirty-nine years of age only. With mixed thoughts of sorrow and solace he fondly speaks of her, "I have always dwelt upon her loving-kindness during my childhood days. Her sweet countenance still lingers clearly and vividly in my eyes. I am thankful to the Lord that she brought me in contact with the Christian missionaries who were truly the servants of the Lord. When I heard the tragic news of my mother's death I felt very sad and lonly. Especially I felt much for her as I could not be near her sick-bed to nurse her during her last moments. Above all, although I had a strong desire to return home immediately, I could not do so as it was humanly impossible for me to undertake the long and difficult journey to attend the funeral to pay my last respects to my beloved mother. I still remember how she used to pray at home. As a result of her life and testimony my grand-mother, two aunties (mother's sisters) and their husbands were also brought to the Lord. My grand-mother was a great woman of prayer." Tharchin himself is a great man of prayer. One wonders whether the habit of prayer is hereditary! Tharchin's father who was never converted to Christianity died sometime later.

Tharchin went on to say, "Soon after Rev. Schna-  
bell and the family returned to Poo, naturally I

also returned with them. Rev. Schnabell was a far-sighted person and therefore, foreseeing the future of the church he desired to train me up in the Biblical and theological disciplines so that I could be prepared to assume the burden of the Church of the morrow with efficiency and competency. With this purpose in mind he would teach me Bible lessons twice a week. He would guide and instruct me in the contents of the Old Testament and the New Testament, the expansive and progressive history of the church through the centuries and the sound basic principles of the church government." Tharchin says that he still has some of the Bible notes with him even today. "This training," he admits, "however simple and superficial it might appear on the surface, strengthened my Christian faith and enriched my understanding of the inspired Word of God."



## CHAPTER 2

## IMPRESSIONS OF DELHI DURBAR (1)

"...Jesus Christ...the prince of the kings of the earth."

Revelation 1: 5

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Once again, God in his mercy and goodness guided the steps of Tharchin to the celebrated city of Simla which had enjoyed and still enjoys the advantage of being the venue of important administrative offices of the government. Since the cool and congenial climate of the countryside displayed salutary effect upon the human physiology, it appealed to and attracted the European settlers who thronged to the place in plenty. During the British regime it had acquired historic (2) significance and as a result of this political prominence many government officers selected the site to settle down permanently. During those days the sight of the spotless sanitation of the city was proverbial. A visit to Simla evinced a sign of culture. It aggrandised the personality of the visitor. It was a political pilgrimage. But for Tharchin, simple and humble, the trip was only casual.

For him, strolling through the streets of the market, the modern and palacial buildings of Simla were a far cry from the stony structures of backward

(1) Originally the word meat 'court'

(2) As regards with Tibet that place is famous for Simla convention of 27 April, 1914



Poo. Even the thought of comparison signifies stupidity. One day as Tharchin was rambling through the bazaar like a novice his eyes caught the crowd standing in a semicircular on the main street. The sizable gathering, for that matter, would have attracted the attention of anybody, more so of this rustic lad. Out of curiosity he neared the spot to discover the cause of the assemblage. When he looked he was taken aback to find Sadhu Sunder Singh whom he had encountered just a year ago (3) in Kotgarh. Although Sunder Singh was alone, he was proclaiming the gospel of Christ zealously and courageously to the critical and credulous crowd. The average audience was listening to the address with rapt attention and apt retention.

Certainly, the saffron robe of Sunder Singh would have captured the hearts and minds of any segment of Indian society. Anyway, Tharchin waited patiently until the people were dispersed summarily. He intended to meet Sadhuji. At the conclusion of the speech as Sadhuji was about to depart Tharchin approached and accosted him with folding hands according to the traditional Indian custom.

At first glance, Sunder Singh failed to recognise Tharchin whom he had seen a year ago. The oblivion was obvious. Besides, Tharchin was differently attired than he was accustomed to, which probably may

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(3) Vide page 9

I have been the reason why Sunder Singh could not recognise him instantly. After a few words, Sunder's memory suddenly clicked and he remembered Tharchin like a flash. In surprise he exclaimed, "Are you Tharchin? What has happened to you? Come with me." Sadhuji escorted him to St. Thomas church library where he was lodging with a few Christian friends some of whom were serving in the Government offices. This incident occurred on the 2nd of May, 1907.

Tharchin says, "Sadhu Sunder Singh asked me if I was intending to return home for the summer season to which I rendered a negative response. Thereupon, Sadhuji invited me to stay with him and enjoy his fellowship. I consented readily." In this way Tharchin continued to spend his days in the sweet company of this great servant of the Lord. He had the blessed privilege of travelling with Sunder Singh in the surrounding hills and valleys serving him and the Lord faithfully little realising that one day his companion would attain great heights of saintliness and prominence, sanctity and publicity. In the course of our conversation, when I casually touched on the present prosperity of Tharchin, he with his usual candour commented, "The blessings of my dear friend Sadhu Sunder Singh have fallen upon my life abundantly because, I believe, I served him and also served my Lord sincerely and faithfully during the days of my

youth. This is the goodness of the Lord unto whom I ascribe all the glory, honour and majesty." (4)

(4) A. J. Appasamy in a biography on Sunder Singh recounts the meeting between Sadhu Sunder Singh and Tharchin in Simla bazaar. (Vide first edition, 1966, P.36, Para 1, Published by the Christian Literature Society, India). This narration needs to be corrected or clarified as under.

A. According to Tharchin the date of meeting with Sunder Singh in Simla is 2nd May, 1907. According to Appasamy it is in the year of 1908. A slight variation need not disturb the reader as it may be allowed in view of the lapses of memory which can play easy tricks upon the mind.

B. Tharchin is referred to therein as "a domestic servant of the Moravian missionary, Schnabel". While it is true that Tharchin assisted Schnabel in the household affairs, it is unfair to employ an epithet 'a domestic servant'. Two considerations may be advanced along this line. (1) Schnabel would never have trained Tharchin the way he did in the Biblical and Theological lines, had he considered him as a professional servant. At least no missionary acts in this manner. C

(2) O ...Tharchin is described 'working as a coolie carrying stones and was in ragged clothes'. While there is no denial of the substantial truth contained in the statement the expression 'coolie' should not be construed to convey the sense of professional coolie. The term has a temporary connotation. It is customary among the inhabitants of the mountainous regions to come down to the plains or at least to the areas of lower altitudes during the winter season to escape the severe cold.

In order to eke out the livelihood these simple and innocent migrants take up any temporary employment they may obtain. After the severity of the cold has relented, they usually return to their original destination and engage them-

selves in their erstwhile activities. Under these circumstances Tharchin worked as a labourer only for a short while. After all, the children of Israel did no better when they were in bondage in the land of Egypt.

D...The paragraph contains the following statement: "During this time Sundar Singh taught him Hindustani." This assertion is totally incorrect in view of the fact that he learned Hindustani while he was a pupil in the Mission school at Poo.

E...Since the back few pages of the copy available of the biography in question is torn, it is not known whether or not Tharchin gets any place in the index.

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Tharchin continued, "On one occasion When Sunder Singh was leaving for the plains, obviously to conduct the Christian convention, he effectuated proper arrangements for me to stay with a very highly educated Indian Christian, Daud Singh (5) who had married a European lady who originally came out as a missionary. Daud Singh's father was a minister in good standing in the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) in Abbotabad (6) then in the Punjab. Daud Singh was engaged as a private tutor for a chaplain who was intending to appear for an examination in Urdu. Since after the summer vacation chaplain returned to Ambala, Daud Singh also returned with the chaplain.

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(5) In English David Singh. His actual name was Samuel David Singh. He died on 1st August, 1915 at the age of 51. At this time Tharchin was in Ghoom.

(6) Now in Pakistan.

As regards the appearance of Daud Singh Tharchin recalls, "He was an elderly person with closely shaven beard. He was above average height. He had fair complexion. Besides this, Daud Singh was an accomplished technician. He was well versed in the manual arts of carpentry, painting, furniture-making and book-binding. He was an adept at making coffins of various sizes, shapes and woods with glazed polishing and finishing. In the metropolitan city like Delhi coffins are always in great demand and often, urgent orders were received without a moment's notice. The sales brought an additional income for Daud to supplement the regular monthly salary. Furthermore, Daud Singh possessed sound practical knowledge of bicycle mechanics. He could easily repair a puncture or dismantle a machine and rejoin it. He could detect any sort of mechanical defect. He had a carpentry studio in his own residence. Besides this he had a business shop in which mechanical and manufacturing works were finished by trained technicians."

In Ambala Daud Singh secured a contract for book-binding. Over a thousand church hymn books were in a torn and dilapidated condition requiring repairing and immediate mending. Since he was an industrious person he reconditioned the books in no time. Tharchin narrates, "I learned the art of book-binding from him without any fees. The knowledge of this art helped me when I began to publish my own books in my printing press. Even the smatter-

I ing of bicycle mechanics sometimes served me in good stead." In the year 1959 when Tharchin paid a visit to Delhi he made a special point to go to the church cemetery. In order to express his gratefulness and thankfulness to the solid contributions made by Daud Singh, he took flowers, cleaned the grave with his own hands and snapped the photograph of the spot, which, he says, is still in his personal album.

I After completing the temporary assignment of tutorship to the British chaplain arrangements were made for Daud Singh to take up the responsibilities of the principalship of S.P.G. institution in Delhi. Hence Daud Singh sent Tharchin in advance to Hoshiarpur intending to join him later. After a while the entire family arrived from Lahore and having spent one month there all of them proceeded to Delhi where Daud Singh was to assume his responsibilities or duties immediately. During his stay in Delhi Tharchin assisted the family in the household activities as well as in the mechanical projects. He thankfully comments, "I learned the art of furniture-making and repairing from Daud Singh which was of great service to me especially at a time when the printing machines went out of order and immediately no expert technician was available on the spot or on the spur of the moment. He at times entrusted me with responsibilities such as supervision of workmen and payment of weekly wages."

During these days in Delhi Tharchin was struck down by a severe attack of malaria which forced him to retire to the salubrious climate of Simla city for change in order to obtain physical rest and improve his general health.

Tharchin recounts, "After my convalescence in Simla a European hunter required an expert interpreter so I volunteered to accompany him on the troublesome tour. On the return journey I requested the hunter to allow me to make a flying visit to my birth-place Poo, the corrugated roofs of which glittered silverlike in the sunshine at a distance of twelve miles to the south of Spitti. The prospect of revisiting my birth-place welled up within me fond memories of the past and eagerly I looked forward to meeting my classmates and other acquaintances of my childhood days. Unfortunately the inconsiderate hunter turned a deaf ear to my petition and my earnest plea was thrown to the winds. I was very much disheartened and was even frankly annoyed with him. Since there was no other alternative I had to satisfy myself to have seen the village of Poo from a distance very much like Moses of old who had to be content having seen the promised land from the top of Pisgah on the mountain of Nebo. (7) Particularly the thought pained me a great deal as I was unable to pay even a quick visit to my mother's and grand-mother's graves in

order to place a wreath of flowers to their hallowed memory out of my deep love and reverence for them.

I Thus we returned to Simla and I continued to spend my time as before. One day I chanced to meet some friends who had come down from Poo and among them I recognised my uncle. After an enquiry I learned that they had lately arrived in the city with the specific purpose of escorting Rev. Kunick back to Poo as he had just returned or rather recently returned from furlough in Germany. After some exploratory conversation Rev. Kunick advised me to return with him to Poo. My friends and especially my uncle prevailed upon me and so I made up my mind and went back with the party to my birth place. I worked in the Moravian Mission for about the duration of one year.

I From Poo I regularly corresponded with my master Daud Singh. In one of his letters he extended an invitation to me to stay with him if I so desired. This momentous welcome gave me an incentive or inspiration to fly back on foot to Delhi where I arrived by the middle of 1909. Here I continued to reside with Daud Singh family. I endeavoured to help Mr. Singh a great deal as he was busy expediting the contracts of Delhi Durbar held in the year 1911." (8)

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(8) "At the close of 1911, Their Majesties King - Emperor George V and Queen Mary visited India and were received with an outburst of loyal enthusiasm. A magnificent durbar was held



at Delhi (Dec. 12), and Their Majesties made two important announcements. The first was the reversal of the partition of Bengal and the second was the transference of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi. "(Vide A Brief History of India, by Dr. R. C. Majumdar, 27th Edition, P. 241.)

One must bear in mind that in spite of vagaries and vagrant tendencies Tharchin had learned to discipline himself from his early childhood. As he grew up spiritually, his devotional habits developed regularly and sincerely. He learned to wait upon the Lord at the commencement of the day. Daily he used to read a portion of the scriptures from the Tibetan New Testament which he carried with him wherever he went. Indeed, often men of prayer are men of discipline. *he*

Originally ~~Tharchin~~ *he* received the copy of the New Testament as a present while he was in Poo. With regards to the moulding influence and valuable service of this New Testament upon his life, he admits, "It was a great source of comfort and consolation to me especially at the poignant moments when I felt the acute absence of my mother and grand-mother as well as other near relatives. I often pondered on the deep things of God and in this way I began to be conscious of the unfathomable love of God for me. Without the constant companionship of the Tibetan New Testament my spiritual life would have gone dry and dead. It would have become barren."

I While in Delhi one morning as usual he took  
 I out his Tibetan New Testament in order to quietly  
 wait upon the Lord. Before reading the Scripture  
 passage he casually leafed through the pages and  
 thus happened to turn to the back side of the New  
 Testament. Suddenly his eyes fell on the words;  
 I "Printed at the Scandinavian Alliance Tibetan Mission  
 I I Press, Ghoom, Darjeeling." He asked a friend what  
 these words meant and he informed Tharchin that  
 it was the address of the place where the New  
 Testament was printed and published. On further en-  
 quiry the same friend assured him that a letter  
 would safely reach the destination if the above noted  
 address was properly written. Not knowing a bit  
 of the English alphabets Tharchin copied the English  
 letters exactly as they appeared in the print and  
 wrote them in the address column. The contents of  
 the letter, however, he wrote in Tibetan. The Post-  
 man at Ghoom-end must have laughed to read such  
 a funny address, viz, "Printed at the Scandinavian  
 C Alliance Tibetan Mission Press etc." The letter was  
 I reached safely and was rightly delivered to Rev.  
Waisma who was stationed as a missionary at Ghoom.  
 Rev. Waisma evinced prompt interest in the subject  
 matter of the letter and immediately replied sugges-  
 ting that Tharchin come to Ghoom and join the  
 work by the first of November, 1911.

The suggested date was unsuitable for Tharchin  
 because he was keenly interested in the political

developments of Delhi Durbar convened on 12th December, 1911. It would have been a preposterous mistake to have missed the opportunity of a lifetime to witness the pomp and splendour of the royal visit to India. The princes as well as the poor were interested in the occasion. In addition to this Tharchin was interested in the teaching profession for which he had been preparing already. He feared that he might lose the opportunity of teaching post if he failed to reach Ghoom by the first of November. He desired neither to miss Durbar nor to lose the chance of teaching work. The dilemma worried him no end. He prayed much about the matter to resolve the tension and obtained God's clear and unmistakable guidance. After much thought and prayer he wrote to Rev. Waisma regarding his keen desire to attend Durbar. Thank God the predicament was solved. Rev. Waisma understood Tharchin's position very sympathetically and kindly granted his request. He was granted an extension of time. He says, "I was very thankful to the Lord for this answer to my fervent prayers. It taught me how God leads us and guides us through all circumstances aright even if the moments be fraught with crises and difficulties."

When asked to convey his personal impressions of Delhi Durbar (also known as Coronation Day of Their Majesties King Emperor George V and Queen Mary) since very few persons alive today have had

the unique privilege to have watched the greatness and grandeur of the function; Tharchin paused for a while and then with a thoughtful mood replied, "I still remember the general details of this pompous reception accorded to Their Majesties. As they arrived a tremendous ovation was voiced by the people the noise and tumult of which shook the entire place and pavilion with echoes and reverberations. The royal couple were seated in a beautifully decorated and ornamented carriage drawn by eight horses.

Some spectators got such a shock of unprecedented happiness that I still recall a man sitting in front of me who fell down to the ground and was nearly going to faint. The Indian princes who attended the function were dressed in the best of their jewellery and vestments. The overt loyalty of the people seemed to stagger the limits of imagination. The visit captivated the minds of the feeblest only. The patriotic section of the people attached no significance and paid no attention to the celebrations. However, when the great nationalistic struggle to achieve Indian Independence moved forward with great zeal and enthusiasm the Indian masses supported the cause of national freedom whole-heartedly and vehemently. The subsequent events led to the nationwide success and progress of the liberation movement to compel the British to quit the shores of India. On 15th August, 1947 India became a sovereign republic. The day was inscribed in golden

letters in the annals of history".

Tharchin, at present, is a minister (9) in the Church of North India. He wants to take this opportunity to draw an edifying analogy from the said incident to impress upon his audience the significance of the blessed hope cherished by the church, that is to say, the patient waiting of the ecclesia for the second coming of Christ our Lord and Saviour in power and great glory. He emphatically asserts, "If so much of joy and exultation was expressed over the reception and coronation of an earthly king then how much more greater joy and exultation will be voiced at the second advent of Christ who is the king of kings and the Lord of Lords when he shall return to this earth to reign over the people for a period of thousand years. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

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(9) Now retired but still serving in the honorary capacity. In the meantime one of the members of his congregation is undergoing Biblical training in order to take up the responsibilities of the Tibetan pastorate.



## CHAPTER 3

## AT GHOOM: NEW DIMENSIONS

"...This is the way, walk ye in it..."

Isaiah 30 : 21

What the tiny little village of Ghoom might have been approximately sixty years ago need not tax one's imagination now, except to infer on the meteorological grounds that the village must have been then as now one of the most mystic spots on earth because more often than not like a monk in the cloistered monastery the village meditates under the canopy of the opaque mist and fog, which defy, if not defeat the piercing and the penetrating rays of the noonday sun. It is snugly ensconced in a vaguely undefined area; the lower portion around the post-office is designated as Ghoom railway station while the higher portion where Siliguri-Darjeeling route branches off to Kalimpong is known as Jorebungalow.

In popular parlance Ghoom is situated in the mountainous arms of the Himalayas at the approximate altitude of 7500 ft. This name, so sweet to the international tourists, who travel or can travel by the toy train, really deserves the fame it emits in the Himalayan region. Today the place is connected with five important sight-seeing views for which the affluent travellers, tourists, explorers and mountaineers

pay high and exorbitant rates in order to enjoy and appreciate the profuse and prodigal beauties of nature. Sunrise Hill situated at approximately 9000 ft. altitude is visited by hundreds of tourists every year from all over the world to catch the glimpse of the rare and fair vision of Mount Everest the ruling queen of the Himalayas. Should the weather fail and the mists prevail, still the disheartened tourist is most likely to get the panorama of the bloodred sun which as the Psalmist says, "as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race." (1) Indeed the red-ball of fire which ascends the horizon bedecks the sky changing from red to yellow and golden to molten colours. The entire view of the firmament dazzles the eyes and puzzles the mind with the mysteries of God who creates the aesthetic productions on the canvas of nature along the oriental sky. Surely the great Divine Painter who much like the creation can bring the beauty, something out of nothing, can make millions of Michael Angeloes blush in shame.

Besides the attraction of Sunrise Hill from where one can see the rugged side of Kanchanjunga and the rest of the snow-covered peaks of the great Himalayas, some tourists visit the Senchal lakes for their serene and unruffled peacefulness, the Keventers dairy farm for its successful experimentation in milk and meat production, the monastery at Ghoom famous

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(1) Psalm 19:5

for the imposing and giagantic image of Maitri Buddha and last of all the Batasia loop where the toy-train turns round to rush round the hill down to its ultimate destination of Darjeeling station proper. Lest one might misconstrue, Tharchin was not attracted to Ghoom by the innate beauties of nature but by the hard and cold facts and circumstances of life which relentlessly impel a person to travel on the path of life and lo and behold ever since then Tharchin made his home at Ghoom and at last permanently settled down at Kalimpong.

On the 4th of January, 1912 Tharchin bade goodbye to the metropolitan city of Delhi and set out for misty Ghoom. The Geography lectures in the Moravian Mission school at Poo left him innocently ignorant regarding the geographical positions of Ghoom and Darjeeling. This lack of knowledge, of course, made him a laughing stock among others. Tharchin not knowing the travelling details bypassed the Ghoom station and by mistake alighted from the train at Darjeeling station on the 9th of January. At Darjeeling he innocently enquired about the route to Ghoom and this naivete on his part only helped to produce amusement and laughter among the bystanders.

The night had already fallen, and the severe cold of Darjeeling began to freeze his body. Accommodation became a knotty problem for this strange lad far away from his birthplace. However, a kind



businessman took pity on him and piously offered him a dirty, dingy, dusty and dismal room for a night but as Tharchin <sup>s</sup>reminiscently speaks, "I had to clean up the floors thoroughly before I could spread the bed and lay my head to rest."

The devil had his own designs on Tharchin and the transference from smoking hookah seemed to be more natural than logical. He recounts, "Near my room I chanced to see a brandy shop inviting all its devotees and repelling none. As I was already fond of Hookah I was compulsively tempted to try and taste a glass of brandy to heat up my body which was feeling the chilly weather of Darjeeling quite acutely, but the Lord gave me grace and moral strength to withstand and overcome this enslaving temptation. This moral resistance at the right moment helped me gain greater victories in later life."

To make things worse, Tharchin did not have even an idea, it appears, of the transportation or the vehicles plying between Ghoom and Darjeeling. Perhaps he was too innocent to know about it or to shy to enquire from others. He engaged a porter to carry his bag and baggage all the way from Darjeeling to Ghoom traversing the distance of about five miles on foot up the steep hill. He paid the porter four to five rupees for what otherwise he could have easily managed with only ten

paise or one fiftieth of five rupees. Had he used his brains he could have gone back by the same train in the afternoon. How ludicrous !

The reader should remember the fact that originally while Tharchin was in Delhi he had applied to Ghoom Mission for a post in the printing press. Since the Mission printing press was already sold out, Rev. Waisma offered Tharchin the post of a Hindi teacher in case he was proficient in the grammar and structure of the language. On receiving the letter Tharchin immediately and promptly flashed back saying, "Sir, since I have an excellent knowledge of Urdu language, I could tolerably teach Hindi as both the languages are akin to each other in grammatical forms and phrases." Without a moment's delay and on the very day, he rushed to Delhi bookstores in search of a standard book and bought a Hindi grammar. With great earnestness and regularity he devoted himself to the mastery of the materials, which aroused the curiosity and even evoked the admiration of his friends who wondered why the inquisitive lad was so enthusiastically sold on the study of Hindi. Tharchin modestly admits, "I still have the first primer of that Hindi grammar which I studied in Delhi with great concentration. By the time I arrived in Ghoom I had confident control of Hindi. I was well versed in the art of reading and writing the language. My expression was facile and the diction being commensurate to the thought

intonation was accurate."

He taught Tibetan in the Kindergarten section and Hindi in the upper primary class. Usually and normally he prepared Hindi lessons carefully at home prior to their rehearsal in the classroom. Karma Samden (2) who was the then headmaster of the Mission school often assisted Tharchin in advance in the preparation of English and Hindi units. Tharchin is keenly aware of his indebtedness to this headmaster of whom he often speaks in casual conversation with a sense of gratefulness and gratitude.

He says, "Before I was accepted and appointed as a teacher at Ghoom, Rev. Waisma desired to sound off my background in order to screen and psychoanalyse me thoroughly. He wanted to prove my intellectual integrity, emotional balance and capacity to conform to the rules and regulations of the Mission. With this intention in mind I was asked several questions through the letters. The questionnaire was based on topics of varied interests and diverse aspects of life and love. Some of the questions were such as:—Are you a drunkard? Are you a debtor? I replied to these questions in the negative. He also wanted to know if I was married. The answer was obvious as I was a bachelor. Rev. Waisma enquired if I was a smoker. I informed him that I was not but lest he might misunderstand

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(2) After his conversion to Christianity he was named Karma Samden Paul. He died recently in Kalimpong.

me or accuse me of false intimation, I clarified the point by admitting that I was not a smoker of cigarettes but rather I was addicted to my beloved smoking-pipe, namely, Hookah. I just meant to be sincere. I did not mean to be smart."

With respect to his didactic experience at Ghoom, Tharchin, now mellowed by life and time, confesses, "I learned various useful and practical things at the Ghoom Mission. Here my spiritual life improved and deepened in the close fellowship of the godly missionaries. Formerly my energies were frittered away and my activities were aimless but from now on my life began to be oriented along the right directions and dimensions and I began to compose myself successfully and spiritually. I realised God's richest blessings on my path and the hand of the Lord was ever nearer, clearer and dearer to me."

One day Tharchin was smoking the hookah as usual as he was habituated to indulge in this sort of pastime. Just at the very moment Miss Kempe, a Finnish missionary, appeared on the spot. She is still thankfully remembered by the people in Kurseong and Pedong for her selfless and sacrificial service. As soon as Miss Kempe noticed Tharchin smoking, she lifted up the entire hookah from in front of him, threw away the pipes and the pot she nicely cleaned, polished and filled with beautiful fragrant flowers from her well maintained garden.

Tharchin very picturesquely describes the scene, "When Miss Kempe whom I addressed as Ani Kempe (Ani meaning nun) snatched away the hookah from me, I was nearly tempted to throw her away like a tiny little doll, were it not for a friend of mine who prevented me from executing the rash act. Later when she converted the pot-case into a flower vase and ostensibly brought it to me I could not control my indignation and to her great horror I spurned it and threw away all the flowers. Afterwards I repented of this thoughtless and hasty behaviour. The poor missionary also very graciously pardoned me. But just the same, I picked up the broken pieces of the pipe one by one and tried to join them. My carpentry training came in handy. I tied together all the pieces with a piece of string and began to smoke the hookah like the devil as furiously as before. All the while I was smarting and fuming with fury and anger. Rebellion was brewing up within my mind."

Tharchin went on to narrate the incident more dramatically saying, "Since the Anilas, Misses Treshback and Juriva, disapproved of my habit of smoking hookah I tried to substitute cigarettes. Not being satisfied with this alternative, Anilas hit upon a novel plan of helping me to do away with the smoking habit. They thought that if the habit was allowed to go unchecked it would mar my health. They had goodwill towards me and therefore desired my highest good. They meant me well.

One day they presented me with a box of sweets and biscuits. The box was beautifully packed and attractively wrapped in coloured paper. They suggested that I munch the sweets and chew the biscuits whenever I was beset with smoking temptation. They also bought a locally manufactured leather bag for me so that I could save the smoking money in it. While I was trying to convert my cash into ash, the Anilas were trying to convert my ash into cash. Still I could not overcome the habit in spite of my best efforts and their best endeavours.

Noting the fact that the plan had failed to make any controlling impact upon me, the Anilas tried another idea. Ani Kempe, particularly, purchased a fine violin from Rev. Waisma who by this time had left for Finland on furlough for good. I believe the musical instrument cost Rs. 120/- those days. Anila offered the violin to me advising to play on the string at the moment of danger of being drawn by the desire of smoking. Even then I could not give up the habit. It had completely enslaved me and I had lost the will power to be victorious over it."

The violin had no case. Tharchin kept it hanging on the wall in his room in the damp weather of Ghoom which is very harmful to the wooden musical instruments as the humidity in the air warps and cracks the laminated wood.

On one occasion he was induced to pick up the instrument to try out a few strokes and learn a few

church hymns on the violin. Since he possessed musical talent, he really learned a few numbers and could easily play several songs tolerably pleasant to the ears but, of course, not without a few jarring mistakes. Even then the psychology of the musical violin brought no satisfactory improvement and he failed to attain the goal. The smoking habit stuck on him as fast as the leeches. To adapt the words of St. Paul he could have very well cried, "O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me (3) ( from the habit of smoking ?)

One evening, as before, he went upstairs to attend the prayer meeting since it was the regular feature of the day before retiring. The normal time was at about 7 O'clock P.M. After a short passage of Bible reading and prayer the meeting came to an end. Describing the later scene Tharchin says, "Thereafter, I returned to my room downstairs. I began to search for the matchsticks in order to light the lamp which had somehow been extinguished. Although I groped everywhere I failed to find the matchbox in the pitch darkness. I got fed up, gave up and in exasperation resigned myself to sitting on the bed heavily not realising the violin was lying on the cot. The result was inevitable and disastrous. The instrument, under the weight of the body, it seemed for a moment, was irreparably and irretrie-

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(3) Romans 7:24 ( Parenthesis ours )

vably ruined and lost. I took the violin to Darjeeling and the estimated cost of mending the instrument was said to be not less than Rs. 60/- This meant that the instrument had to be set aside for the time being at least until the availability of sufficient funds for the repairs.

The venerable Tharchin finally admits with the sense of true and genuine humility, "The violin was offered to me so that I could stop smoking once for all. I failed to eradicate this desire and humanly speaking I was powerless and paralysed to vanquish the habit as I had no control over my will power in this matter. This proves that we all need God's grace to do what we cannot do with our own works, will or strength. I failed to obey and no wonder the instrument went into splinters." This explanation may sound finely fatalistic and naive but the point is clear and the moral cannot be mistaken. At last the rustic lad of the village learned the lesson of the day. The mental rebellion finally calmed down. To complete the story, it took a miracle of grace to annihilate the smoking habit once for all.





## CHAPTER 4

## ALONG THE TEESTA VALLEY: PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL

"...They...went everywhere preaching the word." Acts 8 : 4

Joining the Mission service must be regarded as a vital and pivotal point in the life of Tharchin. For him Ghoom became a gateway to academic progress and spiritual development as well. As a teacher he began to impart knowledge to others while as a student he began to imbibe knowledge from others. Spiritually he became strongly grounded in the word of God and began to reflect intellectually and theologically on the Christian truths. Unlike the past he began to channel his energies and harness his abilities for constructive purposes. In other words he began to dedicate himself to God in new ways. He learned that the inner impressions must have external expressions. In this way he began to burn for God. The zeal of the Lord began to consume him and he started to venture great things for God's kingdom. The quiet contemplation on the Word of the Lord began to pay dividends in the form of witnessing for the Lord.

In the year 1912 Tharchin arrived at Ghoom from Delhi. In the month of December of the same year he visited Lachen in Sikkim where he had an

opportunity to meet the Christian congregation. In the following year (1913) he accompanied Rev. E. Olila of Finland on the preaching tour around Siliguri area. In the winter of 1914 Tharchin and his friend Prem Singh from Ghoom Orphanage waited upon the Lord and decided to spread the gospel news along the Teesta Valley. (1)

From Ghoom they followed the descending path through the lovely green forests of pine trees and tea gardens on either side and walked down to

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(1) The journey along the Teesta Valley must have been very hazardous during those days as today. The valley is carved out by the wild river Teesta which during the rainy season almost goes mad causing clossal destruction to the forests and road-communications. The road along the valley is now motorable and the accidents are very common especially during the heavy rains. Due to absorption of rain water huge landslides occur in the area which sometimes cut off the connections of the interior lands with the outside world. Since the road runs along the river bank by the sides of the straight mountain cliffs at any time a piece of stone or a big boulder may fall on the head from great heights. The railway lines referred to are no longer extant as project was abandoned after the heavy landslides of 1950. The annual repairs on the railroad construction cost more than the income it realised and therefore there was no other alternative but to dismantle the lines.

Besides, the climate of the forest areas is unhealthy. In the lower regions both intensive heat and malaria can cause great danger, even death, for the persons habituated to live in the high altitudes of the hill regions. Tharchin and Prem Singh must have experienced God's amazing protection several times during their gospel tour.

Teesta Bazar. Here many Tibetan workers and labourers were engaged in the railroad construction project. Besides this, several Tibetans were employed in the tannery owned by a well - to - do gentleman from Ghoom. This proprietor was once a Christian and even a catechist but for some reasons he became cold in spirit and went back to Buddhism.

With the permission of the proprietor Tharchin and Prem Singh (2) lodged with the workers of the tannery. One night at about 11 O'clock there was a knock on the door. Some one had come to inform the occupant in the next room about a lady who was restless and very serious. This particular woman had tried all sorts of medicines including the local and jungle curatives and even a Jhakri. (3) She had undergone treatment the previous six months with no change for the better. The messenger further reported that since the woman might take a turn for the worse at any moment some remedy or treatment must be administered at once. The occupant consented to arrive on the spot at the earliest possible minute. Since the room occupied by Tharchin was just in the way, he could not help but overhear the entire conversation. He enquired

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(2) Later he served in the army and rose to the rank of a major. Very recently he passed away in Kalimpong and was buried in the local church cemetery. He was popularly known as Major Winifred.

(3) A demon-possessed man who is believed to have wielding power to exorcise illnesses.

about the details from the next door occupant and offered to accompany and pray for the sick woman if she wished. The occupant conveyed this message to the near relatives of the patient. They very gladly agreed to the proposal and promptly Tharchin and Prem Singh were summoned to rush down to the spot without a moment's delay.

Tharchin and Prem Singh were overjoyed at this golden opportunity. They hoped a great miracle to happen that day through their hands. They hurriedly rushed and reached the place and first of all preached to the entire family about the Lord Jesus Christ. They told them about the power of Christ to heal all manner of diseases (4) and that He is the same yesterday, today and forever. (5) They explained to the members of the family that if it were the will of the Lord then he could heal her but if not, death might overtake her easily and calmly and even her soul might be saved. The sick woman seemed to follow the preaching. This they could gather from the way she nodded her head to indicate her response. She was too feeble to open her mouth and speak in audible voice.

After a session of prayer and consolation at about half past one after midnight Tharchin and Prem Singh returned home. They greatly rejoiced because on

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(4) Cf. Math. 9:35

(5) Cf. Heb. 13:8

that occasion many Tibetans had the opportunity to hear the name of Christ. After returning they straight went to bed. Tharchin as yet had not gone to sleep. His mind was still cogitating on the implications of the incident.

At about 2 A.M. a messenger arrived with the news that the lady had breathed her last. Tharchin comments, "When I heard this disturbing news I was very much disappointed. I became angry with the Lord and I began to quarrel with him in my heart. I began to argue with him, Lord, you have promised us to heal the sick in your name if we prayed according to your promises. Although we have prayed earnestly, still the lady passed away. Besides, I began to argue that if the lady had been healed of her disease in your name, then several Tibetans in the establishment who heard the gospel would have been converted. Moreover, the renegade proprietor would have repented of his sin and come back to the fellowship of the church. Thus in a very dejected and defeated mood, I fell asleep. It was around 3 A.M. In the background of this disturbance, I had a faint memory of the words of the messenger who casually reported that the lady died peacefully and calmly.

"At about 4 O'clock in the early morning I saw a dream in which someone was telling me not to be discouraged and that I should read the verses

recorded in Romans 10:13-14. At the very moment I woke up, lit the candle as it was still dark. I opened the Bible and read the verses as I was directed in the dream. The passage in question read as follows:— For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?—And how shall they hear without a preacher? I immediately grasped the import of the Scripture passage and this comforted me very much. I came to realise that the lady was only waiting to hear the name of the Lord and now that she heard the gospel, she believed, was saved and got gathered with the Lord. This was confirmed by the report of the messenger regarding the peaceful death of the woman without the slightest sign of excitement or disturbance. In this way I began to comprehend the mysterious and the marvellous ways of the Lord which otherwise are inscrutable. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD."

From Teesta Bazar Tharchin and Prem Singh went along the Teesta Valley proclaiming the good news of the gospel of Christ. They travelled along the Siliguri road and reached a village called Domar (6) which is quite some distance away from Siliguri proper. There they met a Bengali Christian

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(6)..... It lies two or three miles from Siliguri to the west.

family with whom they lodged for several nights. They enjoyed a wonderful fellowship with the family. They stayed with this particular family as they were known to the head of the family who was a catechist. From time to time the catechist used to visit Ghoom Mission Station where he came in contact with Tharchin several times.

After a few days Tharchin and his companion returned to Siliguri. From here they proceeded in the direction of Matigarah where a big fair was being held. As they were travelling on foot they preferred to take a short cut. This meant that they would have to ford a small stream. For its size the current of the water was powerful and sweeping. Both the friends rolled up their pants, and folded up their sleeves. They carried their luggage on their backs so that they could maintain good balance while walking across the swift stream. As soon as they crossed the stream a Tibetan camp loomed large before their eyes. A dozen or so tents were pitched which were occupied by the Tibetan workers. Tharchin was carrying his violin (7) which had

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(7).....Violin helped Tharchin a great deal to pick up organ music. For the want of proper organist, several times, while conducting the Sunday morning Tibetan church services after 1925 he managed both the pulpit and the organ playing it with two fingers one of each hand. In spite of wrong timings and incorrect notes sometimes, he never gave up sitting at the church organ as it was very essential part (the organ - not\*the mistakes) of the congregational singing.

been already repaired in Darjeeling. Prem Singh was carrying a bagful of Christian tracts and literature for distribution among the people. Both the brothers must have looked funny with their queer paraphernalia.

When they neared the Tibetan camp one worker presuming them to be Indians remarked, "Look at these Indian beggars. They are so young, hale and hearty, still they are begging." Immediately cut to the quick, Tharchin spoke up, "We are not beggars, not at all. We are givers. What we give will bring you eternal life and peace." Seeing this flitting reaction Tibetan workers were flabbergasted and could not speak a word for a moment. They were surprised to hear Tharchin speak fluent Tibetan. Gradually all the men, women and the children of the camp flocked to hear what these strange men had to say. The preachers banked on the opportunity to proclaim the soul-saving gospel of Christ to Tibetans. Others who crowded there but could not understand the Tibetan language requested Tharchin to preach the gospel in Hindi which he did gladly. Thereafter the Tibetans invited the preachers for sumptuous food and delicious butter-salted tea in a Tibetan style. All the Tibetans were happy that these so-called beggars could speak their mother tongue without a flaw.

Next morning Tharchin and Prem Singh came to Siliguri. There they enquired about the correct



timings of the train leaving for Ghoom. They were informed that the train would be leaving sometime at about 6-7 O'clock in the early morning. They were also told regarding the stopping of the train at a spot about one mile from Siliguri. So they kept on walking towards the direction of the train stop. Along the way they saw a Tibetan family sheltering under a Pipal Tree. The lady in the family was very sick. She was suffering from swollen face and feet. She was unbearably uncomfortable. She could not manage to walk due to severe pain in the body. Tharchin and his friend prayed for her very earnestly and faithfully. They taught the woman and her husband a small prayer. They made them repeat the prayer several times. The prayer was something like this:— "Lord, forgive our sins. If it is thy will, heal me." Just then the train arrived and stopped at a distance of hundred yards. The preachers hurried to the spot and boarded the train. They returned to Ghoom safely in the forenoon. From here onwards Tharchin continued the normal ministry of teaching and preaching as usual.

In Ghoom Mission it was customary to conduct an open air meeting every Sunday just close to the Mission bungalow along the main thoroughfare. Whenever possible other friends and believers used to join the open air meeting in order to help in the meeting as well as to stand as bold witness for the

Lord. During the summer months some of the Christian Missionaries handed over a temporary charge of the local Mission work to the national workers and came to summer resorts like Darjeeling or Ghoom in order to escape the scorching heat of the plains. On Sundays some of these missionaries used to join and participate in the open air meetings. The interested persons took turns to sing a song, play a musical instrument or bring the gospel message. Some preached in Hindi while others in Nepali language. Interpreters were provided for those who were willing to preach but could not speak either Hindi or Nepali. The entire preaching team consisting of various nationalities each one carrying some piece of Christian literature in his or her hand with lots of musical instruments created an attractive impression on the audience or the passersby.

One day in the month of June after the other speakers had finished preaching, Tharchin took his turn to proclaim the message of Christ. He could preach in Nepali, Hindi as well as in Tibetan. As he began to declare the message in Tibetan one man and a woman from the crowd crawled forward and were about to bow down before Tharchin saying, "Kadrin Chen Yisu, Kadrin Chen Yisu, that is, Kind Jesus, Kind Jesus". Tharchin immediately prevented the man from bowing down or taking hold of his feet. He told the man, "I am not Jesus. I only prayed in the name of Jesus. So do not worship me."

It came to light that this man and woman were exactly the persons for whom Tharchin and Prem Singh had prayed under the Pipal Tree in Siliguri while waiting for the train. The man said, "I still remember how you prayed for my wife. You also made us to learn a simple and short prayer and repeat it several times. My wife was suffering from swollen face and feet. In spite of visiting several hospitals in tea-gardens she could not be cured. Since you prayed for my wife she began to show signs of improvement and now she has recovered fully."

This incident was being watched and witnessed by all the Nepali and Tibetan people who were listening to the redeeming gospel of salvation. The word of the man was a great testimony before the crowd to prove that God in the name of Christ hears and answers prayers of his loved ones on behalf of the sick and the suffering. Even the missionaries who had assembled there that day were completely impressed with the dramatic incident. Later both the man and his wife were kept under Christian instruction for a couple of months. Miss Kempe taught them daily from the Word of God. Eventually the couple was ready to receive water-baptism.

Needless to mention that Tharchin and his friend Prem Singh were happy to serve their Master and Saviour so faithfully by preaching all along the Teesta Valley. Their experiences deepened their faith

in the efficacy of the Word of God and the healing power of Jesus Christ. All the while Tharchin had a great burden to bring the salvation message to Tibetans which gradually became his lifetime work and vision. Through these pioneering ventures he learned to suffer for Christ which rightly prepared him to travel later with his most esteemed friend Sadhu Sunder Singh.



## CHAPTER 5

SADHU SUNDER SINGH :— PROPOSED VISIT TO TIBET

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations..." Matt. 28:19

This is the great commission of the Lord. Many godly disciples of Christ have obeyed this commandment of the Lord literally. They have gone to the ends of the world not caring for their lives or loved ones. Their ultimate purpose has been to bring the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who are sitting in the shadow of darkness and death. In the great galaxy of these bold pioneers of the gospel of the kingdom of God many illustrious names can be cited. Indeed, their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Surely great shall be their reward in the world to come. For example, David Livingstone trekked across the dense jungles of Africa to blaze forth the torch of the gospel of Christ. He desired to bring the natives within the eternal fold of his Master and Saviour.

Sadhu Sunder Singh, an Indian Christian saint and mystic, without any dispute can be easily classified among the great stalwarts of faith, who suffered all sorts of privations and difficulties to proclaim the riches of the glory of Christ to the perishing world. What is unique of these humble and noble souls is the fact that though dead yet they speak of the contents and the cost of disciple-

ship to the generations to come. Their lives inspire us even today.

The life of Sadhu Sunder Singh has influenced many who in turn like their Master and Saviour have dedicated themselves unconditionally and unreservedly to the extension of the kingdom of Christ. Books and articles have been published in the past and continue to be published in the present, still more could be written about Sadhuji from the sources which are still untapped.

As far as the first proposed visit of Sunder Singh to Tibet from the eastern side in his evangelistic tours through the state of Sikkim is concerned, Tharchin is the only living authority today to vouch for the details of Sunder Singh's ventures in Sikkim. In the past he has answered the correspondence of Sunder Singh's friends confirming the visit of Sadhuji to Ghoom and other places. He has not seen the copy of his materials published in its entirety anywhere. Some stray references to his statements in two (1) biographical books on Sunder Singh have been brought to his attention by his friends. It is very likely that extensive excerpts from his

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(1) Sunder Singh, A Biography, By A. J. Appasamy, First Indian Edition by the C. L. S., 1966, Madras, India.

The Gospel of Sadhu Sunder Singh, By Friedrich Heiler, Abridged Translation by Olive Wyon, First Indian Edition, 1970, the Lucknow Publishing House, Lucknow, India.

letters may have been preserved in the German language but this is also a matter of conjecture since Tharchin does not know German nor has any German edition on the life of Sunder Singh ever been sent to him. It is, therefore, in the providence of God that the Christian world is once again blessed with one more golden opportunity to hear about the hitherto unknown facts and statements from the life of Sadhu Sunder Singh. The originality of these materials will be evident to any comparative reader of the biographies of Sadhuji.

Tharchin asserts, "Around the 10th of May, 1914, Sadhu Sunder Singh arrived in Ghoom with the specific intention of undertaking a journey into the closed land of Tibet in order to proclaim the gospel of the grace of Christ to the Tibetans also. Strangely enough, in Simla, I lived as the guest of Sadhuji, while in Ghoom Sadhuji lived as my guest. Sunder Singh spent one week in Ghoom. During this time he took the Christian meetings and on Sunday he addressed the Christian congregation in the local church. It was a blessed time of fellowship to hear the Word of God from this great servant of the Lord. Thereafter Sunder Singh left for Nepal without me as he thought he could easily manage there with the help of Hindi (2) language which due to its

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(2) Since Sanskrit is the root language of Nepali, people knowing Hindi, Marathi or other languages of Northern India related to Sanskrit can easily follow and even pick up the Nepali language without much difficulty.

similarities to Nepali, is easily understood by the Nepali speaking population. Contrary to the common belief, it must be pointed out that Sunder Singh came directly to Ghoom to stay with me. He did not take any meetings in Darjeeling town proper. To the best of my knowledge he did not even visit Darjeeling at all except to pass through it after our return from Sikkim".

From Ghoom Sadhuji went to Elam in Nepal. Since this part of Sunder Singh's life requires critical consideration, a special section has been devoted to its discussion in later chapter.

Sadhuji carried a Urdu New Testament with him. He read it daily, prayerfully and thoughtfully. He also carried a copy of the Bhagavad Gita with him, which he later left with Tharchin at Ghoom. Tharchin does not know where he missed or misplaced that copy of the Bhagavad Gita. In it Sadhuji had underlined certain passages with ink. In the margin he noted the references from the New Testament which seemed to contain or convey similarity or identity of thought. It seems that Sadhuji was comparing the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita with that of the New Testament so as to compare Hinduism with Christianity, with the purpose of discovering possible identical elements. The discovery of the said copy of the Bhagavad Gita among the belongings of Tharchin will be indeed a find of great importance as it will afford an idea of Sadhuji's insight into the thought patterns of Hinduism and Christianity.



Tharchin says, "Sunder Singh had a pocket-size New Testament. Possibly it was bound in black leather. I still remember once while I was cooking food for both of us for the evening, he was reading from the New Testament going over it slowly in his mind. Usually he carried one blanket and spotted-deer-skin which he rolled up as is customary with Indian holy men. Before his trip to the plains he left the deer-skin also with me but after sometime it got spoiled, perhaps, due to the damp weather of Ghoom. Sunder Singh carried with him an extra yellow robe. Usually he rolled up the blanket inside the deer-skin. He wore a thin piece of cloth on his back. Sometimes he hung the belongings from his shoulder and sometimes he carried them under his arms."

Tharchin very vividly gives a photographic description of Sunder Singh's winsome personality. He remarks, "Sunder Singh's appearance (3) was balanced. He seemed to be in the same mood always possessing the most smiling countenance. During sleep he used

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(3) Compare this description with the one delineated by A. J. Appasamy:—"His (Sadhu Sunder Singh's) was a picturesque figure, tall, handsome and serene, often reminding people of Jesus Christ. His yellow robe, fine turban and bare feet even in the coldest weather set him off from the rest of men." (A Biographical introduction by A. J. Appasamy under the Real Life by Sadhu Sunder Singh, Reprinted 1968, The Christian Literature Society Madras-3, India.)

to produce some sort of sound (4) which was not the sound of snoring but what it was and why it was I could not understand. I observed this phenomenon every day as he used to sleep very near me. I presume it may have been due to some exercises in yoga or practices in special kind of breathing."

Before the proposed visit to Tibet Tharchin requested the Mission for leave which was readily granted. From Ghoom (7500 ft.) Sunder Singh and Tharchin followed the descending route through mountains and reached Peshok (famous as Peshok Tea Estate) where they spent one night in a Mission primary school. Next day they pursued the same descending route until they came to Teesta Bazar (appr. 2000 ft.) which is situated on the right bank of the dangerous and fast-flowing river Teesta. From there they had to

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(4) One may compare this with the following:— Commenting on the manner the inspiration came to prophet Mohammad:— E. Ahmad Shah an erudite and well known Christian scholar in his work of great magnitude writes, "Sometimes messages were received in dreams and sometimes through visions. On such occasions the prophet used to utter reverberating sounds like that of a camel. These sounds were given meanings and interpreted in words by the prophet himself." (Theology: Muslim and Christian, Page 42, Para 3, First published 1970, Lucknow Publishing House, Lucknow, India)

In view of this might it be possible that during his sleep Sunder Singh had been receiving some revelations of the vision of Christ as a result of which he produced the peculiar sound during his sleep?

climb steadily uphill for about seven to eight miles again through the dark and dense forests until they arrived in Kalimpong town (appr. 4000 ft.) which during those days was quite uncivilised and backward. (5)

Both Sunder Singh and Tharchin as his interpreter lodged for three to four days as guests of Desraj an Indian Christian convert from the Punjab who then was serving as a teacher in the local S.U.M. Institution. (6) Later he worked as a supervisor in the storage and supplies department of Dr. Graham's Homes and at last retired as a well-to-do contractor. At the time of this story Desraj (7) occupied the teachers' quarters, that is, the first two rooms (now near the water tap) of Aath Dhuray (8) in

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(5) Since 1914 Kalimpong has made great advances in many directions. It is one of the favourite towns of tourists. The town has a Government hospital, a Government college and a Government Agricultural Farm.

(6) Scottish Universities' Mission Institution(S.U.M.I.)

(7) Due to his friendship with Desraj Tharchin was also inclined to seek an employment within the Dr. Graham's Homes Establishment. Desraj drafted the application and advised Tharchin to mail it to the proper authorities of the Homes. Since Tharchin was working with the Ghoom Mission, the Homes authorities suggested him that he could obtain an employment provided he could secure release from the Ghoom Mission. The Ghoom Mission was reluctant to release Tharchin as he was indispensable for them. So in order to please him they later sent him for the teacher's training at Kalimpong. Tharchin tactfully took the advantage of the bargain.

(8) The line is named after the eight smoking chimneys.

the Mission lines.

In Kalimpong Sadhuji spoke in the Sunday morning service at 11 O'clock in the local Macfarlane Memorial Church. (9) Earlier he visited the Sunday school (10) which then was held in the same Church building. He addressed the gathering of the children who must have been impressed with the Christ-like appearance of Sunder Singh. Rev. Namthak was then the minister of the Macfarlane Memorial Church.

From Kalimpong Sunder Singh and Tharchin took the short cut passing through Dr. Graham's Homes establishment and proceeded to Algarah Bazar (appr. 5000 ft.). From there they went to Pedong the last town on the Indian border. The path all along went through dark and fearful Himalayan forests. The same foot-path is still used today by the local inhabitants although now the forests are much cleared out and the dangers are less common. The roads, although rough, are broadened. The route to Algarah Bazar steadily goes uphill and then to Pedong (appr. 4000 ft.) it descends gradually. At Pedong Sunder Singh and Tharchin lodged with a Christian doctor for a night.

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(9) Originally the evangelization work in Kalimpong was started by the Church of Scotland missionaries. Now it is a part of the Church of North India.

(10) Now a days the Sunday school is held in the auditorium of the Mission Girls' High School.

## CHAPTER 6

SADHU SUNDER SINGH :— PROPOSED VISIT TO TIBET

(Contd.) :— PREACHING THROUGH THE STATE OF SIKKIM

“...As having nothing, and yet possessing all things.....” 2 Cor 6:10

From Pedong Sunder Singh and Tharchin proceeded to Rehnock. They persued a declivitous route all the way down to the River Rishi (appr. 3000 ft.) It was the route which was trodden down by the mules and caravans from Tibet which annually descended into India for the trade and commerce in wool, skins and fur. (1) The terrain was naturally difficult and fraught with dangers although the recent years have modified the arduous situations of the bygone years. From the river Rishi they walked steadily straight uphill until Rehnock Bazar (appr. 3500 ft.)shot into sight. It is the first town inside the state of Sikkim then under the monarchical rule of the Maharaja. Rehnock Bazar then was an important halting station for the caravans from Tibet. The political developments of recent years have reduced its one time high prestige and position. Tharchin and Sunder Singh reached Rehnock sometime in the afternoon and put up in the Mission school. Attached to the Mission school a Mission dispensary met the medical needs of the public.

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(1)...Those days the Tibetan merchants carried back with them cloth, kerosene and stationery from India.

At Rehnock Rai Bahadur Pradhan who was honorarily officiating as the magistrate invited Sunder Singh and Tharchin to his residence. He was a wealthy landlord and a man of tremendous influence in the local and government circles. He entertained Sunder Singh and Tharchin with fine food and delicious tea. He advised them not to proceed via Jelep pass but to go via Nathula pass. This made it necessary for them to go first to Gangtok the political capital of the Sikkim state. In the meanwhile Rai Bahadur Sahib convened a special meeting in his court-yard and for this occasion he invited several of his friends and near kinsmen to hear the sermon of Sadhuji.

Tharchin at this advanced age of eighty four years confidently asserts, "I still recall that in his sermon Sadhuji referred to a person who did not believe in God and later fainted and fell down senseless while no harm was done to God-believing and God-fearing men. Sadhuji was careful to point out the fact that the incident occurred somewhere in a western country. After the message a few enquirers presented some thought-provoking questions and problems to Sadhuji who answered them convincingly and satisfactorily. One gentleman interrogated if the human and animal souls were identical? What happened to animal soul after death? What is your viewpoint? Sadhuji answered in the following manner:— In a certain place out in a western country

a man and an animal almost at the point of death were separately closed in air-tight cases with all sides shut and sealed. They were intact. At the moment of actual death the glass-case containing the human body cracked while the glass-case containing the animal body did not crack. Lest there might be doubt about the incident, Sadhuji explained to his audience that he had not seen the experiment personally. He had only heard that the scientists had experimented in the manner described above. Sunder Singh argued that if the experiment be assumed true then it logically and undoubtedly proves that the human soul is not identical but rather quite contrary to the entity of the animal soul. This exposition seemed to appeal to his listeners. Their intellectual curiosity was satisfied."

In this connection Tharchin remarks that Sunder Singh had a very keen sense of humour. His audiences laguhed heartily with him. Sadhuji had a great gift of employing natural illustrations. They were simple and yet forceful. With an ordinary illustration he could drive a point home what otherwise could not be achieved with uncanny abstractions.

After the conclusion of the programme the host turned to Sadhuji and said, "You are a holy man. You have touched our soil. You have no shoes. You also do not accept shoes otherwise we would have offered a pair. Since you have no shoes, it

will be sinful on our part to let you trek through our territory unshod." As a matter of fact they literally offered him a pair of shoes but Sunder Singh declined the offer and voluntarily chose to walk barefooted over the cold and leach-infested soil of the Himalayas. The host rightly surmised that the offer of the pair of shoes would be declined by Sadhuji. The idea behind this act was to compel Sadhuji to divert his route so that he would go via Gangtok. A pony (2) was offered to Sadhuji to travel upto Pakyong but he refused to ride on the creature. Since the journey from Rehnock to Pakyong is very steep it was kind of the host at Rehnock to be so considerate of Sunder Singh. Tharchin humourously says, "I rode the pony at several places although I felt awkward because it did not look proper ( in fact it was discourteous ) for me to enjoy a pony ride while Sadhuji was walking barefooted on the rough surface. However, I was very much tired. Besides Sadhuji told me to ride the pony without the slightest hesitation, and so I took the opportunity with a sense of humility."

After a steady and steep climb from Rehnock they arrived at Pakyong (appr. 5000 ft.) sometime in the evening. They managed their food and lodging with friends of Rai Bahadur Sahib who had communicated

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(2)...Generally a person is supposed to ride a pony when the way is uphill and not downhill, although this is not a hard and fast rule.



the word of the arrival of the guests in advance. No open-air meeting was conducted in Pakyong. Both Sunder Singh and Tharchin left the place early in the morning enroute to Gangtok (appr. 6700 ft.) and reached their destination at about 10 O'clock in the forenoon. The journey was equally difficult in this region as the road passed through the dense forests and the danger of robbers lurked in the dark. Today the constant traffic on the main highway to Gangtok often gives a chance to get lifts in the trucks or the passing cars. Since the motor vehicles ply throughout the day one can always cry for help in case of any attack or accident. Sadhuji and Tharchin could not dream of these journeying vantages those days. They had to depend totally upon the journeying mercies of the Lord, for protection and provision. The Lord was always faithful in all circumstances. Before their arrival at Gangtok Bazar they were met by a Sikkim state policeman with their names and full particulars as these items of information had been intimated beforehand to the police headquarters.

The policeman on duty advised them to see the officer-in-charge at the police station. When they reached the station, the officer concerned had already left the office for his residence. The policeman then instructed them to proceed to the officer's private residence to meet him there. The policeman himself personally accompanied them to the residence which was situated below the

bazar. The walk took them about thirty minutes to go down. After this they had to wait for another hour to see the officer who was sound asleep. Later the officer brought out a long sheet of paper which contained detailed information about them. Tharchin says, "My identity marks on the face were correctly recorded. My height was also mentioned."

After the routine enquiry, the officer-in-charge informed them that without the prior permission of the political officer they could not possibly proceed to Tibet. So they had to walk back to the political office. By now they were dog-tired ! Ever since their arrival in Gangtok on foot from Pakyong they did not get any physical rest at all. On reaching the political office they were told that Sir Charles Bell the political officer had left for a place on the border of Assam or Bhutan. Therefore his secretary a European gentleman personally met them and asked several pertinent questions. He also suggested that they obtain the permission from the political officer first. With this purpose the secretary drafted a telegram and despatched it instantly. Tharchin recalls, "The cost of the telegram came to about Rs. 14/- which was paid from the Government accounts. The secretary instructed us to wait for the return reply. From time to time we continued to visit the political office to enquire about the reception of the reply-telegram."

During this interval, Sunder Singh and Tharchin lodged with a Christian chowkidar (3) of the dak-bungalow. He was very kind and hospitable. Tharchin had known him previously when in the month of December, 1912, he went to visit Lachen, Sikkim, via Gangtok. The Chowkidar usually served the food in the morning. They took their evening meal with a Christian catechist who lived about a mile away from the bazar. After the meals normally a family prayer meeting was conducted. Sadhuji led these meetings with devotional messages. While in Gangtok this particular Christian catechist requested Sunder Singh to conduct the Sunday morning worship. Sadhuji gladly complied with the request. The service was held in the private home of the head-clerk who was in the employment of the state government. Since there was no church building (4) in Gangtok those days, the believers regularly assembled in the home of this Christian head-clerk for the worship and communion.

Tharchin narrates, "Sadhuji did not have money bag. Usually he carried his Urdu New Testament in his hand and sometimes in his pocket. On one occasion we took tea in a shop on our way from Pakyong to Gangtok. Neither the shop-keeper nor I had any small change with me. On noting this difficulty Sadhuji searched his pocket and took out

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(3)...Maintenance man or a care-taker of traveller's bungalow.

(4)...Now the Christian congregation (formerly of the Church

four annas and handed over to the shop-keeper. I do not know how Sadhuji obtained the four anna-piece. I wonder whether it was a miracle of money! As a rule Sadhuji did not carry large sums of money with him. If at all, he carried only money of small denomination on his person."

In Gangtok a week was spent. During this spare time Sunder Singh and Tharchin conducted open-air meetings in the main street. Tharchin interpreted the messages into Tibetan. On one occasion the policeman on duty waved them to the corner of the road indicating thereby that the preaching be carried on the spot shown so that no traffic difficulties might develop. They conducted the open-air meetings in that town on two or three occasions in the main bazar. There was no opposition to the preaching of the gospel from the government or any section of the population. Unless Sadhuji and Tharchin had possessed the apostolic boldness they could not have ventured on the project of the proclamation of the gospel in a land where Buddhism is a state religion and is entitled to all the royal patronage. One can discern the quiet and effective ministry of the Holy Spirit behind these acts of the modern apostles of Christ.

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of Scotland now under the Church of North India) has a properly constructed church building. Besides, there are other independent church groups all doing an evangelistic work in the area.

## CHAPTER 7

SADHU SUNDER SINGH:—PROPOSED VISIT TO TIBET (Contd.)  
DISAPPOINTMENT :— RETURN TRIP THROUGH WESTERN SIKKIM

"...All things work together for good to them that love God....."  
Romans 8:28

At this point a reader may be taken aside to dwell on the mystery and mysticism (1) of sorrow and suffering, which are part and parcel of life. But just because they are in the warp and woof of life they are not of divine origin. Their universality does not elevate them to an eternal axiom. Who for their existence may be held responsible and who may be exonerated is a philosophical matter which need not be discussed at this juncture. Ever since the historic times poets and philosophers have felt aware of the trenchant reality of sorrow and suffering and have even sung about them to explain them or to reconcile them with reason. When Gautama Buddha grappled with the problem of suffering he did nothing different from others but when he realised the stark existence of the reality of sorrow and suffering he noticed their universality. In other words, for him the reality of sorrow and suffering is the law of life. Discovery of this law made it more

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(1) Note Heiler's remarks, "True suffering is part of Christian mysticism; it draws the Christian into the closest living fellowship with Christ.." Vide The Gospel of Sadhu Sunder Singh, P. 111, Para 2, lines 7-8.

scientific. Even Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes spoke of the fact that man is born to trouble as the spark flies upward. This statement also bespeaks of the universal character of the law of sorrow and suffering, and therefore becomes objective and scientific.

While from the downward-falling apple Newton discovered the universal law of gravitation, Gautama Buddha, on the other hand, following the trend of the upward-flying-spark discovered the universal law of sorrow and suffering. If so, one must put up with the law of life. Reconciliation with the laws of life can alone bring peace and order. To deny them or to argue against them is to question the rational foundation on which unity, development and purpose of life depend. But then where lies the originality of Christ? Here one discovers the second and equally important law of life, at least, certainly of the spiritual life. The liberation from the law of suffering does not lie in running away from it but in the act of facing it boldly in the spirit of Christ. Suffering culminates in the cross and beyond it, it is powerless. By suffering on the cross Christ triumphed over it. He knew divinely well that it was the will of the Father in heaven that He (Christ) should suffer on the cross. If the existence of the suffering is the scientific law of this earth, then the necessity to face the fact of

suffering or in other words, the cross, is the scientific law of the mystical world. Christ proved that after the crucifixion follows the resurrection. But resurrection is not the reorganisation of crucifixion but the total triumph over the fact of crucifixion. Therefore to suffer for one self is to die once for all but to suffer with Christ is to be blessed with the resurrection with Christ. To be dead with Christ is to be raised up with Christ.

Sunder Singh knew better than anybody else the mysticism of suffering. He rejoiced in the cross of Christ. The joy of suffering opened to him the pearly gates of heaven. Tharchin must have learnt a great deal from Sadhuji in the school of suffering. Be that as it may, it was a great disappointment for Sadhuji not to be able to proceed further into Tibet. Since no reply came from the political officer after eight days they decided to take the return journey rightly concluding that it was not the will of God for them, at least, at this time to go to Tibet. Disappointments cannot be prevented but certainly they can be interwoven into the great aesthetic pattern of life. With God as one's partner great things can be achieved. St. Paul rightly remarks, "All things work together for good to them that love God." (2)

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(2) At Romans 8:28, the New English Bible reads, ... "And in everything, as we know, he co-operates for good with those who love God....."

It must be pointed out that Sunder Singh and Tharchin had clearly sought the permission from the political office with the specific purpose of preaching the gospel in Tibet. Since no permission was forthcoming they decided to seek permission to visit the Christian congregations at Lachen and Lachung but this was also turned down. They were completely prevented from proceeding towards northern Sikkim. However, they were granted permission to journey through western Sikkim. They were allowed to make use of the facilities of a dak bungalow on the way.

From Gangtok Sunder Singh and Tharchin took the route going towards Singtam (appr. 3000 ft.) eighteen miles away. These were the hot and sultry months of June and July. Tharchin was carrying about half a maund of clothing and bedding and so he could not walk quickly as the road leading to Singtam and Timi was steep and rough. Sadhuji was lightly dressed so he could move ahead rather faster. He told Tharchin to do his level best to climb the steep hill. Sadhuji humoured on him in Urdu saying, "Koshish Karo - Koshish Karo, that is, try your best, try your best". Sadhuji may have had the load of five seers extra including his blanket, skin and an extra yellow robe.

On the way, to pass the time, Sadhuji narrated several illustrations to inspire Tharchin, who



smilingly comments, "Sunder Singh gave me theological training on the way to Timi. He emphasised two proverbs very much. First, God helps those who help themselves and second, there is no rose without a thorn. He wanted to encourage me and inspire me to accompany him in spite of all the dangers and the difficulties of the travels. I must mention that Sadhuji's favourite theme was the cross of Christ of which he spoke with deep insight and genuine experience. He always referred to the sufferings of our Lord with inward contemplation and fervent spirit."

When they arrived in Timi (appr. 5500 ft.) they had a proper permit from the political office to use the facilities of the dak-bungalow. In the adjacent area a mission bungalow was situated where a missionary had been faithfully preaching as well as looking after the spiritual needs of the handful of believers. Sunder Singh and Tharchin went to meet the missionary as a brother in the Lord but the poor missionary presuming them to be non-Christian beggars drove them away from the mission compound. Without any thought of ill-feeling Sunder Singh and Tharchin returned to their quarters although Tharchin frankly admits, "I was quite a bit annoyed at the behaviour of the missionary."

After an interval of half an hour, to their great surprise a servant from the Mission bungalow came

requesting them to come as the missionary had sent for them. When they came, the missionary in a humble and apologetic tone said, "I did not know that you were Christian pilgrims. I mistook you to be non-Christian Sadhus..." Afterwards he conversed with them nicely and politely. Sadhuji firmly but lovingly reminded him that a missionary ought to be good and kind towards people irrespective of their caste, colour, creed or culture. He ought to behave as becoming a Christian. The missionary took the comments in good grace and took them upstairs and his wife showed them well-furnished rooms requesting them to spend the night and enjoy the Christian hospitality. Sadhuji and Tharchin declined the invitation with thanks. The invitation for the lunch was, however, gladly accepted by them.

Sunder Singh and Tharchin spent three to four days in Timi. On Sunday a dozen believers from a place called Vok (3) about six miles away assembled for worship. The service was held on the veranda of the missionary's bungalow. Sadhuji preached the Sunday sermon. Tharchin says that he does not remember the contents of the message delivered there.

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(3) Late. Rev. P. S. Targain who was for many years the minister in the local Macfarlane Memorial Church and Rev. C. T. Pazo the present minister of the C.N.I. church in Gangtok hailed from this place. We shall hear about them later also.

They travelled through western Sikkim but no open-air meeting was conducted at any place on the way. All along the journey noted above Tharchin acted as an interpreter for Sunder Singh. Of this privilege Tharchin comments, "This recollection gives me great joy and happiness today."

After leaving Timi behind they came to Namchi (appr. 4000 ft.) and spent a night there. Next day they came down to river Rangit (appr. 2000 ft.). Here Sadhuji washed his robe in the river and took a bath for which they must have longed after travelling through the dusty roads of Sikkim. There Sadhuji sang his favourite hymns: — "Like a river glorious and Glory to Jesus, Wonderful Jesus." After a night's rest at Rangit dak-bungalow these suffering servants of Christ started off for the last leg of their journey back to Ghoom.

On the way to Ghoom at Lebong Tharchin bought a dog for Rs. 8/- from a British soldier. Tharchin is a great lover of dogs. (4) Twice the dog ran

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(4) In the year 1921 Tharchin was travelling in the train near about the city of Allahabad in the state of U.P. in North India. He was sleeping in the upper bunk. Suddenly he was awakened by a mysterious disturbance. He sensed uneasiness in his chest. All the time his thoughts were rushing towards the direction of Dr. Graham's Homes where by the way Desraj was residing.

It so happened that exactly at the moment Tharchin was disturbed, his pet dog was accidently killed by the paddy-threshing

away to Lebong a spot little below Darjeeling town proper and twice Tharchin made trips to fetch it. He remarks, "This only shows dog's intimate love for his old master and old place." During this return journey Sunder Singh passed through Darjeeling town proper without stopping anywhere in the market. From Ghoom Sadhuji left for the plains of northern India.

With reference to his contact and companionship with Sadhu Sunder Singh Tharchin (5) gratefully and humbly says, "Finally I like to express myself that I am extremely thankful to my Lord Jesus Christ for bringing me in fellowship and true friendship with Sunder Singh. Sadhuji guided me spiritually and led my steps to Daud Singh from whom I learned many useful and practical things which later helped me a great deal in my printing-press work. I have always looked upon Sadhuji with great respect and

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instrument. Desraj's children were panic-stricken and began to cry saying, "What uncle Tharchin will do when he hears this news?"

In parapsychology this is called a case of Extra-Sensory Perception. Where the bond of love is strong, the occurrence of such case is highly possible.

(5) Compare Appasamy's note on Tharchin, "Tharchin still holds Sunder Singh in great veneration and says that in matters of religion Sunder Singh has greatly influenced him." Tharchin admits the truth of this statement with all purity and sincerity of heart. ( Vide Sunder Singh, P. 36. )

admiration. In 1921 I met him again at Agra on my return journey from Delhi and discussed with him my plans to avail myself of the opportunity to visit Tibet. I told him that we had both attempted to enter Tibet to preach the matchless name of Christ, but we could not realise our plans. Now I might get an opportunity to visit Tibet (1921). Sunder Singh was glad to hear of this opening to enter Tibet. This was in the great providence of the Lord."

Tharchin asserts with assurance, "Sadhu Sunder Singh's love for me was indicated by the fact that while I was in Gyantse, Tibet, he sent me his photograph from England. I still have that memorable picture with me. This indicated that he remembered me and I am sure he also prayed for me regularly."

Thus in conclusion, the proposed visit to Tibet never materialised in spite of all the efforts on the part of Sunder Singh and Tharchin. Regardless of the outcome of the visit, none can dispute Sunder's zeal and burden for the land of Tibet. The double portion of this vision for Tibet later fell upon Tharchin his friend and fellow-traveller. After all, God has His own ways of which man cannot know.

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## CHAPTER 8

SADHU SUNDER SINGH ( Contd. ) ;— A CRITICAL STUDY

"For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake"

Acts 9:16

Several books of a biographical nature have been published in India and abroad on the life of Sadhu Sunder Singh describing his unique experiences and mystical utterances. While some have questioned the validity of his extraordinary experiences, others have challenged the veracity of his arcane statements. Sides have been taken and the line of argument has been drawn on the issues of controversial nature arising from the interesting reading in Sunder Singh's biography. It appears that the debate is still going on endlessly. Tharchin an intimate and trusted friend of Sadhu Sunder Singh is quite aware of the implications and the importance of these moot points. In view of this, the present author asked Tharchin to express his personal viewpoint and reasons, if any, with the specific purpose of throwing an extra light on the incidents in Sadhu's life by way of clarification or rebuttal to the arguments of the critics of Sadhu Sunder Singh. The following is arranged in a serial order rather than in a chronological order.

Tharchin narrates, "From the plains Sunder Singh came straight to me at Ghoom. After a few days at Ghoom described elsewhere, Sadhuji proceeded to Sukhiapokhri (Appr. 6000 ft.) and then to Elam the first border town inside the territory of Nepal. There he started to preach the gospel but was forbidden by the authorities to engage in religious propaganda activities. He was put in the prison and his hands and feet were fixed in the wooden-stock known in Nepali language as "Thyangro" (1) After the return trip from Elam to Ghoom or during the co-travels through the state of Sikkim Sunder Singh never narrated his experiences in Elam to me. I read about these incidents at Elam for the first time in an Urdu publication".

Knowing the topography of the region and the local customs, Tharchin confidently asserts, "I am inclined to believe the incident of imprisonment and the leeches on his body in the jail, which have been questioned by some. When he returned to Ghoom I saw some sores on his back on which Sunder Singh himself applied some iodine. These sores from their appearance must have been due to leeches, which as is commonly known, fall down to the ground after sucking human blood. An excessive suction of the blood may cause

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(1) ठ्याङ्गरो Also Vide Heiler P. 66 and 108 and Appasamy P: 63 :-ff.

weakness and a person may even faint if a large number of leeches climb on the body. (2) The area referred to above is definitely infested with leeches which by and large is true of the large section of the Himalayan region. Leeches as a rule do not climb on the human body as high as the rear portion of the back. This leads one to infer that the leeches must have been thrown on his body while in the jail at Elam. The reticence of Sunder Singh on this facet of the experience may have been due to the fact that he did not want to create any stir or sensation lest it might spoil his future prospects of visiting Nepal again. "Silent suffering is a part of the mysticism of suffering." After cross-questioning, Tharchin reaffirmed, "I did not apply iodine to Sadhuji's sores on the back. Sadhuji himself applied the medicine somewhere on the way from Elam to Ghoom

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(2) In the year 1951 when the present author was in Pedong engaged in the evangelistic work, he lived in the Mission station established by Miss Kempe. Here due to the shortage of the water, it had to be brought from a spring situated on the other side of the steep ridge. One day as he went to take bath a leech climbed on the left side of his leg just above the ankle. Not knowing any thing about the leeches, when he first saw the leech on his leg, he pulled it out thinking he was bitten by a small snake of the mountain. Panic-stricken he immediately curtailed the bathing and returned home. On the way he thought he might die at any moment. After reaching home when he reported the matter he was told about the activities of the leeches. This comforted him to no end.



possibly at Sukhiapokhri where he could have easily obtained the medicine." (3)

## II

Tharchin is also inclined to accept the claim made by Sadhuji regarding the reported existence of the Maharishi (4) in Kailash in the high Himalayas. Of course, Sadhuji did not refer to the ministry of the Maharishi to Tharchin at any time

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(3) N. B. :— "I was arrested and put in prison for six months." (P. 25 Sermons and Sayings of Sadhu Sunder Singh, Second impression, 1924.) The details described in connection with this statement point out the incident at Elam in Nepal. Evidently it contains an error of time. Tharchin says, "Sunder Singh was away to Nepal only for six days. Out of these four days must have been spent for to and fro journey. This means Sadhuji must have been inside Nepal only for two days. The above quoted statement of Sadhuji may have been due to a mistake or misunderstanding on the part of the writer, that is to say mistaking the sixth month of June for six months. (The book is compiled and published by J. Helen Rowlands and Hridayesh Ranjan Ghose). The editors of this book are however careful to comment in the preface:— "Sadhu Sunder Singh is not responsible for any errors which may occur in this book."

Vide Appasamy, Sunder Singh, P. 66, Para 1, lines 1-4 ff :— The statement does not clarify as to who applied iodine to whom. Tharchin says, "I did not apply iodine to Sadhuji's sores. Sadhuji himself applied iodine to his own sores."

(4) Maha in Sanskrit means great and rishi means a sage. For additional information on the Maharishi consult Heiler's work P. 63 ff. and Appasamy's book P. 48 - 49 and a detailed treatment of the subject under separate chapter VI PP. 71 ff. Also P. 50 F, N. I.

either, although Sunder Singh had met the Maharishi two years earlier. (1912). Still Tharchin is prepared to accept the claim on the ground of the sources which maintain that in Tibet sages are still living who are more than two thousand years old. They are said to be sitting in the caves engaged in meditation (5) all the time. These sages are believed to have been contemplating for several 'yugas' or epochs. He is quick to point out that the Tibetans do not regard this mode of contemplation as essential to the obtaining of the highest bliss for the human soul. As such this way of life is not considered to be satisfactory. They regard it as selfish and conducive to one's happiness only. It has no value for others.

These sages are not conscious of the external world. All the while their thoughts are engrossed and their attention is indrawn within the spiritual world of their own creation. As opposed to this, the Maharishi is said to be conscious of the present passing world. He argues, "In view of the above-said, the fact of the existence of the Maharishi in the Himalayas is not incredible."

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(5) According to the procedure the soul is brought to the central portion of the brain. Thereafter the passage is locked by cutting off the nerve under the tongue which is thrown backward and fixed in the nasal opening.

Regarding the spiritual and mystical powers of the Maharishi there need be no shadow of doubt. As is commonly supposed and on good rational grounds too, that the sages practising spiritual exercises can and have developed amazing yogic and mystic powers of mind and spirit.

It is quite possible that the Maharishi kept spiritual fellowship with Christ. As a result of his close communion with the Holy Spirit the Maharishi could have developed the nine gifts of the Holy spirit to a peak-point which possibly might have given him tremendous mystical powers as asserted in certain publications.

### III

The story of Kártar Singh (6) and his cruel death is quite familiar to the readers of Sunder Singh's biography. In this connection Tharchin admits of two types of punishment which were meted out to the criminals in Tibet. According to the first, a criminal was thrown into the well where he died a cruel death. According to the second, a criminal was encased in a raw hide of a yak which was sewn and placed in the hot sun. As a result of the intense heat as the raw hide dried up the

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(6) For additional information on Kartar Singh see Heiler's *The Gospel of Sadhu Sunder Singh*, P. 60 and Appasamy's *Sundar Singh; A Biography*, PP. 45 - 47.

victim inside gradually shrunk until he met the logical end.

Commenting on this Tharchin says, "First, this sort of punishment was given to the criminals only. Second, I find difficult to accept it as a fact that the religious minded Tibetans could choose this kind of punishment for a person who after all was a preacher of a religion. Third, at least Tibetans could not have acted in such an inconsiderate manner. Fourth, they would have given Kartar Singh an alternative of expelling him from the country before resorting to the unkind treatment noted above.

Fifth, after all, the preaching of Christianity was not a new thing to Tibet or the Tibetans. The Roman Catholic Mission in the city of Lhasa is a case in point. In fact, on one occasion in Lhasa, the missionaries were accused, of course falsely, of invoking divine wrath or displeasure which caused the destructive floods in and around Lhasa. They were not given any punishment, far less, was there any talk of raw hide treatment. On the contrary, the missionaries were protected by an official like a prime minister who attributed the cause of the catastrophe to the disturbances of the elemental forces of nature which at times become erratic and go out of control. It is a matter of fact that a missionary was killed in the province of Kham

in eastern Tibet but this was not due to any anti-Christian feeling or any animosity towards the missionaries or the Christians. The heinous act was motivated purely by the thought of plunder. The bandits who slew the missionary fled away with the foreign made belongings of the missionary.

Sixth, the raw hide punishment had already been abolished by the Tibetan government by the time Kartar Singh came on the scene. Seven, on the other hand, it may be possible that Kartar Singh may have succumbed to natural causes of sickness such as pneumonia in the high Himalayas or he may have committed a mistake not knowing well the regional topography or even lacking proper practical knowledge of climbing techniques.

#### IV

The incident of throwing Sadhuji in the well (7) at Rasar is also given wide publicity and much is made out of it. Tharchin again admits the difficulty of accepting the fact of this occurrence. He cannot reconcile this with the religious temperament of the Tibetans, who, he thinks, could not stoop so low as to treat Sadhuji, a preacher of religion, in such a dastardly manner. On the other hand, he remarks, "As noted in some books, if

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(7) For additional information consult:— Heiler's P. 63, 108 and Appasamy's P. 51. Tharchin says, "I have never read or heard of any such place as Rasar."

the lama had noticed the miraculous escape of Sunder Singh from the well, then he (the lama) and along with him the Tibetans would have elevated Sunder Singh to the level of divine incarnation. They would have worshipped him as a heavenly personage."

Whatever may be the truth of the matter Tharchin was never informed of these incidents by Sunder Singh during his stay in Ghoom or on the Sikkim travels. He says, "For the first time I read about these experiences in the Urdu book mentioned before. The well-incident may have been due to Sadhuji's vivid imagination. Imagination at times tends to objectify the existence of its subjective phenomena."

## V

Sadhuji is reported to have seen a cross in the Himalayas. This particular cross is said to have been constructed of pieces of stones joined together. Tharchin is prepared to accept this statement.

After the sight of this cross Sunder Singh is reported to have slipped with his foot and fallen off the precipice and landed at the mouth of the cave where the Maharishi was meditating. He says, "It is quite possible that this particular stony cross may have been planted there by the Nestorian Christians who went about preaching Christianity even to the borders of China." Church history bears

out this reference to the presence and the preaching activities of the Nestorians (8) in eastern Asia.

## VI

"Sadhuji's encounter with the robber", Tharchin comments, "May have been partly true and partly it may have been exaggerated by the publishers. Sunder Singh did not relate this experience to me either."

## VII

Sadhuji is alleged to have said to the Archbishop of Canturbury if my mother is not in heaven then I will go to hell with her. Tharchin says, "Although Sunder Singh's mother was not openly baptised still he may have had some concrete evidence of her secret and genuine faith in Christ otherwise he would not have uttered such a statement before a high church dignitary. At its face value the statement is definitely disturbing (9) and certainly contrary to the accepted creed of the Christian church."

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(8) "... Nestorianism found much following even in Syria and protection in Persia. There it developed a wide missionary activity. In the seventh century it entered China, and at about the same time southern India." (A history of the Christian Church by Williston Walker, P. 149, Para 2, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1953.) See also Appasamy. P. 48.

(9) Note Heiler's P. 134 :— "God's love is active everywhere, even in hell-so the Sadhu was told in ecstasy." and on P. 185 :— "Sunder Singh's teaching about hell is not consistent."

## CHAPTER 9

SADHU SUNDER SINGH (CONCLUDED) : CLARIFICATION

"Blessed are ye when men shall ... persecute you for my sake."

Matthew 5:11

When the biography of Sadhu Sunder Singh was first published several readers tried to contradict the incidents narrated there. Sadhuji himself had admitted the presence of some errors in the book. He intimated that he wished the publisher to rectify the mistakes in appropriate places.

Regarding the travels of Sunder Singh in eastern India, some presumptuous persons had questioned the authenticity of the journey. Some openly denied Sadhuji's visit to Darjeeling and Gangtok in Sikkim. A controversy around the historicity of Sunder Singh's travels was created and continued to gain momentum in Germany. Professor Friedrich Heiler, an eminent scholar, a churchman and a professor of the history of the religions in the university of Marburg in Germany took up the responsible task in great earnest to prepare the case in defence of Sunder Singh. He contacted Sadhuji inviting his comments on the controversial points. Sadhuji naturally instructed Heiler to communicate with Tharchin who had accompanied Sunder Singh as an interpreter in Sikkim state and even acted as his host in Ghoom.



Tharchin, very accurately and meticulously had maintained the details of the journey in his personal diary. (1) In it he had carefully recorded the time and date of their arrival and departure at various places in and around Ghoom as well as in Sikkim. The report of the itinerary was so factual that it proved Tharchin almost to be a historian. Both Heiler and Appasamy quote from Tharchin's correspondence which helped them to establish the case in favour of Sunder Singh refuting the arguments of the critics, especially, on the debatable question of Sadhuji's visit to Darjeeling and Sikkim.

In the year 1927 Tharchin journeyed to Darjeeling in connection with a legal business. There he put up in a hotel. One day a Roman Catholic priest, who on later enquiry was said to belong to a very high order, came to seek an interview with Tharchin in the hotel. Evidently this priest had heard about Tharchin's role in the travels of Sunder Singh in Darjeeling and Sikkim. This particular priest desired to borrow the Urdu publication on the life of Sunder Singh, which by the way, contained several inaccurate entries. The main purpose behind the act of borrowing the book was to get it translated. The priest requested the book be given to him temporarily if not permanently.

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(1) Tharchin says that he still has the said diary in his personal records somewhere. If the diary ever turns up, it will be a very valuable document for the life of Sunder Singh.

Tharchin declined to turn over the book to the priest because in the first place he did not have the book with him at the moment in the hotel. Second, Tharchin explained that as he himself had not read the book thoroughly, which was partly true, he could neither spare it nor part with it. Reflecting on this meeting in the hotel Tharchin remarks, "I neither had the book with me nor did I realise that the priest had approached me to borrow the book with the idea of writing something critical against Sunder Singh."

Failing to obtain the book from Tharchin this particular priest tried to obtain the copy through the back door. For this purpose he contacted one of the friends of Tharchin. Not being aware of this indirect and behind the scene tactics Tharchin gave the book to his friend who as a matter of fact had not asked for it for many years. One day this particular friend in question surprised Tharchin saying, "I have heard about a Urdu book on the life of Sunder Singh. I have not seen it or read it. I would like to go through it to know what Sadhuji had written in it." Very innocently Tharchin handed over the book knowing fully well about the presence of several mistakes in the copy not realising the sinister game behind the asking or borrowing. Tharchin thinks that this particular friend translated the book for the priest. Tharchin does not know whether or not his friend received any

remuneration for the translation work. However, one thing is certain that this friend did not return the book to Tharchin. On one occasion he reminded him to return the book but the friend acted as though he did not know where he had put or misplaced the book and therefore pretended that he might have to search for it.

Tharchin claims, "In this connection I might mention that this particular priest checked my times and dates which I had recorded or narrated in connection with the travels of Sunder Singh. The priest even contacted the political office at Gangtok to verify the dates and found them correct. He was completely convinced about the historicity of Sadhuji's visit to Darjeeling and Sikkim state." The priest is reported to have remarked to one of Tharchin's friends, "I find that man a good diaryman."

Tharchin sadly reports, "In 1928 Sadhuji wrote me a letter saying that he was disappointed with me. He thought that I knew, and of course, I did about the Urdu book which contained several mistakes and even the fact that Sadhuji had written to the publisher for corrections." In the letter to Tharchin Sunder Singh stated, "You have given the book to our enemy and have revealed its contents to them." After receiving this letter Tharchin was sadly shocked to realise how he was tricked by the priest who secured the book through his friend and got it translated. Tharchin was completely inno-

cent in the whole affair, but still he feels very sad especially about the great controversial trouble it created for Sadhuji which, it seems, has not subsided even now. In his casual conversation on more than one occasion Tharchin opened his heart to this author regarding the manner the book was taken away from him and the incalculable difficulties it created for Sadhu Sunder Singh.

Deeply thinking over this point he says, "Probably this is the reason Sadhuji misunderstood me although knowingly and intentionally I did not give the book. I am innocent about this matter. Had I known the whole game I would never have deliberately handed over the copy to the critics or the enemies of Sunder Singh. Perhaps, further more, this is the reason why Sadhuji did not remember me in his will. Otherwise, in view of all the assistance I extended to him at Ghoom and Sikkim and my burning desire to preach the gospel of Christ to Tibetans, it was taken for granted that he would have remembered me in his last will."

Finally, this extensive treatment on the relevant aspects of the life of Sunder Singh would remain incomplete without including Tharchin's comment on the final end (2) of Sadhuji. Tharchin very pensively

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(2) In the year 1950, after Easter, the present author was in Kotgargh beyond Simla. There he happened to meet a gentleman by the name of Nasib Ali who had often travelled with Sunder

remarks, "No definite proof is forthcoming to declare whether Sunder Singh is alive or dead. If the statements regarding Maharishi be given any credence then it is quite possible that Sunder Singh may be with Maharishi. It is also quite possible that he may have died due to an epidemic." (3)

Commenting on the authorship of Hebrews, Origen one of the great fathers of the Christian church is reputed to have said, "But who wrote the Epistle God only knows certainly." (4) In the final analysis we may adapt these words very relevantly to the ultimate end of Sunder Singh..... God only knows certainly."

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Singh from Gartok side. He asked Nasib Ali about the whereabouts of Sunder Singh. Nasib Ali replied that Sunder Singh was still alive somewhere in the Himalayan forests. No reason was advanced, however, for this claim.

(3) "Sunder Singh died in 1929." ( Page VI. The Real life by Sadhu Sunder Singh, A biographical Introduction by A. J. Appasamy P. VI. ) reprint, 1968 The Christian Literature Society, Madras - 3, India. When a certain evangelist in the presence of the present author asked Tharchin regarding Sunder Singh's death, Tharchin replied "What is the proof that Sunder Singh is dead and again what is the proof that Sunder Singh is alive?"

(4) The Epistle to the Hebrews, the Greek text with notes and essays, A commentary by B. F. Westcott. P. IXVIII, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids Michigan, U. S. A.

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## CHAPTER 10

## TRAINING AND SERVICE AT KALIMPONG

“ Study to show thyself approved unto God..... ”

2 Timothy 2 : 15

In Ghoom Tharchin carried on his profession of teaching as usual giving instructions in Hindi and Tibetan languages to the pupils in the school. He dispensed his duties not with an eye-service but with joy and fidelity. He evinced keen interest in imparting education to the children.

Those days as per the regulation of the Education Department the schools were visited annually two or three times by the school inspectors in order to check the normal workings, standardise the correct procedures and assess the teaching ability and experience of the instructors. Accordingly Ghoom Mission school was also visited every year by the inspecting authorities of the district education board. On each pertinent visit the school inspector evaluated and admired Tharchin's subject-matter and method of teaching the lesson. The inspector entered excellent remarks on his cumulative performance in the record book as he was deeply impressed by Tharchin's aptitude in the teaching profession. The inspector further recommended that he should be deputed to the teachers' training at the earliest. The Mission was also in favour of implementing the recommendation of the educational authorities

and therefore they resolved to send him to the teachers' training course instituted at S. U. M. institution. This would afford a timely opportunity for him to improve his academic qualification which entailed enhanced salary with other financial benefits after the completion of the training period.

The missionaries, moreover, were interested from the psychological angle, as they thought that the deputation to the training school would divert Tharchin's attention from his pre-meditated plan of bidding goodbye to Ghoom and packing back to his beloved Simla or Kalimpong. He remarks, "I am sure this was the leading of the Lord. My admission in the training school bettered my status as a teacher as the subsequent events bear out." In the training school he was offered Rs. 7/- as a Government stipend. Out of this he used to spend Rs. 5/- for defraying the boarding expenses and the other Rs. 2/- he used to set aside as pocket money for himself. He comments, "I still remember that with such a small amount we used to purchase one seer of fine village rice for four annas now costing Rs. 4/- for the same quality"

Prior to the actual entrance to the training school a difficulty arose as Tharchin was averse to accepting the above stated financial proposal because his income from the Government stipend came to only Rs. 7/- while in the Mission service he was drawing Rs. 17/- per month. This meant

that he would have to incur a loss of Rs. 10/- per month as compared to his original income. The Mission tried to increase its contribution but he was not satisfied with the slight increment and rightly so. At last the Mission considered all angles of the question and decided to pay him an extra Rs. 10/- Thus both from the Mission and the Government sources he managed to exact his regular monthly income of Rs. 17/- This showed Tharchin as a businessman in the making. As per the normal procedures, of course, he had to underwrite an agreement with the Mission which obligated him to serve the Mission school for the stipulated period of five years after the termination of the training course.

It might be mentioned at this juncture that in the year 1917 at Ghoom Tharchin succeeded in compiling the second primer of Tibetan language. The first primer was already compiled by Rev. Waisma in 1912. The Ghoom Mission first obtained the prior approval of the Education Department for Tharchin's second primer as prescribed textbook for the schools before submitting it to the press. By the way, both the primers were printed in the Baptist Mission Press in Calcutta.

As a sequel to this, it so happened that the then principal of the S.U.M. Institution, Dr. Sutherland saw Tharchin's book listed in the catalogue of Government - approved books prescribed for



the educational institutions. Immediately Dr. Sutherland sent for K. D. Pradhan (1) who then was serving as an assistant teacher in the same school and enquired of him wondering why Tharchin had not intimated this fact at the time of joining the training school in 1917. Dr. Sutherland was in the dark regarding Tharchin's command of the

(1) ... Very affectionately Tharchin remembers K. D. Pradhan and says, "In those days he was the hostel superintendent. It was customary then for the students or the hostellers to attend the regular prayer meetings every day in the morning and evening. Besides this normal routine, K. D. Pradhan as he was a very devotional personality, used to gather some selected students and teach them from the Bible. He used to encourage them to meditate for about fifteen to twenty minutes and then used to call upon someone to pray. He also used to pray with the students. Indeed he was a very spiritual Christian. Tharchin also remembers to have attended his marriage ceremony in the local Macfarlane Memorial Church, and thereafter a fine feast in his home then on the way to Durbin.

After his marriage K. D. Pradhan left the hostel work and in his place Tharchin was appointed a superintendent of the hostel by the Principal Dr. Sutherland.

From 1952 onwards until his retirement K. D. Pradhan was an acting Principal of the local Christian college. Among the local Christians he was the first person to obtain M. A. degree in Philosophy privately from the University of Calcutta. He was a contributor of thought-provoking articles to well-known periodicals. He was also instrumental in the revision of Nepali New Testament upto the book of First Corinthians. As his student in the college the present author remembers him for his simplicity of life, clarity of thought, exactness of expression and depth of knowledge in addition to his sincerity and piety.

Tibetan language. Prior to this in 1915 a trainee from Lachung, Sikkim, was engaged to teach Tibetan during an extra hour but later he left to be enlisted in the army. Dr. Sutherland, therefore, requisitioned and appointed Tharchin to teach Tibetan language during the vacant hour. Tharchin states, "I was very much pleased with this new assignment. I endeavoured to fulfill my responsibilities and duties as a Tibetan teacher as conscientiously as possible and I hope to the best satisfaction of the principal."

At the end of 1919 Tharchin went back to Ghoom and resumed the teaching work. In the meanwhile Dr. Sutherland contacted the Ghoom Mission to release Tharchin to teach Tibetan in S.U.M.I. He also indicated that Tharchin could attend other classes as a regular student outside of his normal classes and matriculate himself without any fees or charges. The Ghoom Mission kindly consented to co-operate with the proposal of Dr. Sutherland and Tharchin was permitted to take up the post in the S.U.M. school. Tharchin being an ambitious person was quick to grasp the offer. He took full advantage of the opportunity. He worked hard on teaching Tibetan but worked still harder to learn more about other school-subjects. He remarks, "I desired to improve my compass of knowledge and therefore I utilised every moment to master the school curriculum. I tried my level best to acquaint myself with the particulars of the modern sciences as they were taught in the school. I am thankful

to the school authorities for granting me special consideration to attend the classes regularly and even to appear for the periodical examinations as a regular normal student. I am above all thankful to the Lord for this occasion to equip myself educationally."

It was in the year 1919 while he was in S.U.M.I. that Dr. Sutherland made an arrangement whereby Tharchin was to accompany (as an interpreter) four university commissioners who wanted to see the oldest monastery Padma Yangtse in the Western Sikkim. This monastery houses a large Buddha's image as well as image of Padma Sambhava the founder of red sect in Tibet. The commissioners toured through the area for about one week and returned via Namchi. From there they proceeded to Darjeeling where they put in the Planters' Club. Tharchin says that the commissioners gave him an excellent certificate of merit.

Reflecting back on the school days he remarks, "Those days were quite different in many respects as compared to the modern times. The students then were simple and loving. They were not cunning or crafty as we find them today. Besides they were peaceful and obedient to their immediate superiors. Their respect and devotion towards their teachers was genuine and truly they evinced heartfelt veneration for their mentors. Those days the preceptors were regarded with high honour and

position and as important as, if not more than the parents in the formation of a child's career and character."

By the year 1917-18 S.U.M. Institution was running only six classes. Thereafter every year it upgraded itself by one class until by the year 1921 it became a full-fledged High school. Tharchin had the unique privilege of teaching Tibetan to the first batch of Tibetan students in S.U.M.I. He prepared the students for the school final examination for that academic year but left before the actual examination period because by that time he had got a long-awaited opportunity to go to the land of Tibet.

In his absence one of his brilliant students Chhotuk (now Rev. C.T. Pazo of C.N.I. church at Gangtok, Sikkim) stepped into the shoes of his master and took over the task of a Tibetan teacher. When asked about his (Tharchin's) teaching abilities in view of the results, he smilingly commented, "The result for the year was 100 percent. All the students came out in flying colours." When asked about the number of students who enrolled for the examination Tharchin lingered, smiled and said, "I coached only two students and both of them passed and none failed. So my result was cent per cent."



## CHAPTER 11

## THE FIRST APOSTLE OF CHRIST TO BHUTAN: FIRST LORD'S SUPPER

".....This do in remembrance of me"

Luke 22:19

## I

In the year 1918 Tharchin was first privileged to journey through the mountain-locked state of Bhutan lying to the north of India in the eastern region. Since historic times this state has been closed to the gospel of Christ. In recent years, it seems, some Christian influence has been able to make inroads but still the open preaching of the gospel is forbidden by the authorities.

On his first journey to Bhutan he accompanied Dr. Sutherland who was the then principal of the S. U. M. Institution. Dr. Sutherland took the initiative as he was requested by the Maharaja of Bhutan to establish schools and provide the necessary qualified teaching staff to run the institution. Therefore, as per the direction of the Maharaja, the principal despatched four qualified and competent trained teachers from Kalimpong to Bhutan. In the year 1915-16 the first educational institution was founded in Ha-Dzong famous for the residential headquarters of Raja S.T. Dorjee, and another educational institution was founded in Bumthang famous for the residential headquarters of the Maharaja of Bhutan. The then official residence

of the Maharaja was located in the prominent town of Punakha.

Dr. Sutherland and Tharchin travelled from the Jelep Pass to the Chumbi Valley from where they turned in the south-east direction towards Bhutan. The Chumbi Valley is a part of Tibet.

The town of Ha has a Dzong or a castle where the landlords live. It is the state of Raja S.T. Dorjee of Kalimpong. Under the district of Ha several sub - divisions were included. During those days Raja S.T. Dorjee who was an eminent citizen of that area was also an official agent between the Government of Bhutan and the then British Government in India. He had settled down in Kalimpong where his office and residence were situated. Mr. Hornell the director of Public Instruction also accompanied Dr. Sutherland to Bhutan. Tharchin was taken along as an interpreter. They visited Ha Dzong, Paro and Thimpu, then returned to Ha Dzong and from there home to Kalimpong.

The roll-strength of the school at Ha Dzong consisted of thirty to forty pupils with two members on the teaching staff. Kidron Sarkar and Ribu Karthak were the first two teachers of this school. Both were faithful Christians who hailed from Kalimpong. On this particular trip Dr. Sutherland and Mr. Hornell were unable to meet the Maharaja of Bhutan as his place and palace were away at the distance of nine to ten days journey.

From the viewpoint of evangelistic endeavour this trip was not of much significance. One thing however, Tharchin recalled, "Mr. Hornell gave me an excellent meritorious certificate."

## II

In the year 1919 Tharchin again accompanied Dr. Sutherland to Bhutan. This time the principal was requested by the Maharaja to come over to inspect the school and therefore Dr. Sutherland gladly accepted the royal invitation. Raja S.T. Dorjee also accompanied the party. They followed the same route they had taken in 1918. From the Jelep pass they descended to the first village of Rinchengang. After a night's lodging they veered towards Bhutan riding on their ponies ten miles along the river Omo Chu. They arrived at Ha Dzong where the party halted for a few days and then proceeded to Paro.

From Paro the party proceeded eastwards. On the way they came across some small villages. In the town of Wangdui Phodrang they saw the huge Dzong. From here the party proceeded towards the town of Tongsa which is also famous for a huge Dzong. After passing through these villages and Dzongs they moved on to Bumthang where the Maharaja resided. Along the way the party came across some beautiful Himalayan ever green forests and lovely landscapes.

The Maharaja did not live in the Dzong. His royal palace was separately situated. Besides this, special residential buildings were constructed elsewhere for his cabinet ministers. During their stay at Bumthang Dr. Sutherland inspected and checked thoroughly the working of the school as requested by the Maharaja. In this particular school children of the noble families were also admitted. Even the heir apparent to the throne was studying in this institution. It was like a royal school.

On this journey Tharchin had taken along a magic lantern. Wherever they put up the magic lantern was shown to the gatherings regardless of their size. Mainly the life of Christ and a few slides of the first world war were shown. Tharchin conducted the entire meeting by himself as he knew the language very well. This was the first country-wide evangelization throughout the land of Bhutan. In view of this Tharchin may be rightly regarded as the first apostle of Christ to the land of Bhutan. At Bumthang Dr. Sutherland conducted an indoor Sunday service in the private residence. The first congregation consisted of Dr. Sutherland, his Lepcha cook, Tharchin the interpreter and the two teachers from the Mission school. Following the regular Sunday worship in the morning Dr. Sutherland officiated at the Lord's supper. This was the first Lord's Supper in Bhutan where Buddhism is the state religion.



Next day Tharchin visited the residence of the teachers in the Mission school. The visit was an eye-opener. To his dismay, he found that these teachers at Bumthang were burning the butter-lamps to the graven images of Buddha in their homes just like the Buddhists do. Evidently these teachers had completely backslidden and gone back to Buddhism. When Tharchin saw their conduct, he scolded them in harsh words saying, "You are hypocrites. You say that you are Christians. Yesterday you even participated in the Lord's Supper." He argued with them very vehemently without any hesitation as both of them were younger than him. Later one of these backsliders was appointed as the agent of Bhutan Government at Buxa for the Bhutanese citizens who had settled down there for trade and commerce. By the way one of these backsliders was a Christian from his childhood who was brought up in the Ghoom Mission Orphanage. It is indeed a sad commentary to know how he went back to Buddhism. The fate of other teacher also ended in a great tragedy.

At Bumthang they saw a paper factory. During this period Dr. Sutherland had audiences with the Maharaja on several occasions. He was also invited to supper at the Maharaja's royal palace.

On the return journey they visited Punakha, the administrative capital where the first Maharaja of

Bhutan Ugen Wangchuk was coronated. In this place there is a big Dzong in which there is a large courtyard. Like in every Dzong Tharchin showed the life of Christ in this castle too. Many monks assembled to watch the show. By the way during the winter months monks proceed to Punakha but during the summer months they turn towards Thimphu which is the present official capital of the Government of Bhutan.

With reference to the natural beauty inside Bhutan Tharchin says, "The country has picturesque landscapes, wooded forests and artisitic field formation which delight the human soul. In Bumthang a sacred monastery called Ku-Je Gumba is worth-seeing. Out of the solid rock a carved out image of Padma Sambhava in deep meditation can be seen. It is popularly believed that the image was not carved out with the human hands. Rather it is a natural impression of the saint Padma Sambhava who is supposed to have meditated in the cave."

Around this time Tharchin was a young man of nearly twenty nine years of age. For this age he must have been quite a venturesome lad. He confesses, "Spiritually I was burning for the Lord. So to say His zeal had eaten me up. I am thankful to the Lord that He used a humble vessel like me to proclaim His soul-saving gospel in the land of Bhutan. I am happy to know that many Bhutanese could get an unique and golden oppor-

tunity to hear about Christ. I am glad. I am happy. Later some of the Bhutanese boys who came for schooling here in Kalimpong recognised me as the person who had shown the magic lantern in Bhutan. Some of them became my students in the Tibetan class in S.U.M. Institution. Even the Bhutanese subjects who came to Kalimpong recognised me and even jovially tried to mimic my accents and my way of speaking the Tibetan language."

On the return journey the party halted at Yatung. Dr. Sutherland stayed with David MacDonald as his guest. David MacDonald was then the British Trade Agent. Dr. Sutherland conducted the Sunday morning service and baptised some children of the Christian families.

In this way the party returned to Kalimpong. From the viewpoint of evangelism Tharchin had a fruitful ministry in the land of Bhutan. We believe that in due time the Lord of the Harvest will honour His Holy word and bring many souls from the closed Land of Bhutan to the Kingdom of His love and grace.

".....Lift up your eyes. and look on the field; for they are white already to harvest." ( John 4 ; 35 )



## CHAPTER 12

## FIRST VISIT TO TIBET: PART I:— SCHOOL AT GYANTSE

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ....."  
Romans 1:16

In the month of May 1921 Tharchin embarked on his first journey to Tibet. By way of reminiscence he says, "I had an ardent desire within my heart to visit Tibet in order to witness for the Lord there. This strong desire turned into an ambition when Sadhu Sunder Singh and I were stopped from proceeding to Tibet to preach the gospel by the political authorities at Gangtok, Sikkim. Besides this I had a powerful yearning within my mind to learn more of Tibetan language and literature as I felt I lacked proficiency in the language, at least, considering the technical aspects of Philology. Apart from this I had an inborn ambition to start and edit a Tibetan Newspaper of my own after returning from Tibet.

Learning of my desire to give up the studies in the middle of the session, some friends tried to warn me not to make the silly mistake of discontinuing the studies. They thought that since I was getting a golden opportunity to obtain full and free education in S.U.M. Institution I should not make the preposterous mistake of losing the chance. But despite their valuable and well-intentioned advice I made up my mind not to miss the trip

at any cost. The above-stated reasons were motivating me from the depths of my sub-conscious mind and it was not possible for me to resist them. Finally I resolved to leave the studies and push on for Tibet."

Tharchin left Kalimpong town on the 2nd of May, 1921. He accompanied some of the friends who were also proceeding in the same direction, at least, part of the way. The entourage passed through the villages of Algarah Bazar, Pedong, Rhenock and reached the village of Aritar. While most of the members of the party stayed at Aritar Tharchin alone, next day, pursued the route to Fadamchand. The main bulk of the party was intending to go to Gangtok from Aritar. At Fadamchand Tharchin met David Macdonald who was coming down from Yatung on his way to Gangtok. David Macdonald was formerly a British Trade Agent stationed at Yatung and Gyantse and was then proceeding to Gangtok the capital of Sikkim State in order to assume the charge as the acting Political Officer there for the short duration of three months. On their encounter both Tharchin and Macdonald exchanged best wishes to each other and bade farewell to follow their respective course of journey. After his arrival at Yatung Tharchin availed himself of the good opportunity to teach temporarily and honourarily in the primary school founded by Mrs. David Macdonald. He

assisted in this school for the period of three months. About 40-50 Tibetan children from the Chumbi Valley attended the school here.

This primary school was patterned after their counter-parts in India. Academic subjects such as Tibetan language, Mathematics, Geography, History and Singing were taught here exactly as they were taught in the Indian schools. The institution was housed in a stony building which was in good condition. Children from both humble and noble families were admitted in the school. The teaching staff consisted of assistant teachers and the headmaster. Tharchin was just a helper for the time being. All attempts were made to impart honest and thorough education to the children. High standards were maintained and the school time-table was observed with strict adherence.

Tharchin says, "The natural scenery of the region was very vivid and lively. The landscapes around Yatung were charming and beautiful. The people in the locality were simple and honest. They are a hardworking race. Then the population was not contaminated by the corroding influences of modern civilization. I noted a great difference among the people on either side of the border with respect to language, culture and the mode of living. Everywhere the general atmosphere was calm and peaceful."

He continued, "After crossing the pass, I thanked the Lord for opening the door so wonderfully for me so that I could get an unique opportunity to enter the land of Tibet. I thought of Psalm twenty three in a special way in view of Sadhuji's and my disappointment in 1914 to enter Tibet. Indeed my heart was overjoyed and I was very happy to enter the Land of the Lamas. I stayed for three to four months, that is, from May to August in Yatung and then in the middle of August I turned my face towards Gyantse."

Prior to Tharchin's departure for Gyantse, he met Dr. J.A. Graham who after the completion of his visit to Bhutan halted at Yatung before proceeding to Kalimpong. Dr. Graham conducted the Sunday morning service and baptised some children there. By way of send-off Tharchin accompanied Dr. Graham on the pony upto the distance of twelve miles towards the border in the direction of the Jelep Pass. When they came to the village of old Yatung, both of them descended from their ponies. Dr. Graham placed his right hand on Tharchin's shoulder and prayed earnestly mentioning therein the hope that God might someday open the closed land of Tibet and that the gospel of Christ might be preached to the Tibetans. After this momentous meeting, they bade goodbye and Dr. Graham and his servant galloped towards the Jelep Pass and Tharchin returned to Yatung.

Having heard of Tharchin's teaching qualifications, the prominent personalities of the locality requested him to start a similar type of school in Gyantse as at Yatung. He was very happy to snatch the opportunity. He believes that apart from the suggestion from the local sources he received the wisdom from above and therefore he was quick to offer his sincere thanks to the Lord. He was grateful to the Lord for His great mercy and grace.

Besides his normal school duties he continued to drink at the fountainhead of Tibetan language and literature. He continued to learn from the learned Tibetan scholars regarding the various phases of the Tibetan language.

Tharchin describes his school at Gyantse in the following words: 'I opened the school with an admission register. Initially fourteen children were enrolled for the opening class. I had brought back to India that register with me when I returned from Tibet, but evidently it is lost somewhere. I myself prepared benches, desks, blackboards and the essential school paraphernalia. The school was formally opened at the end of September. Gradually the roll-strength continued to increase until the number reached from 14 to 20. I taught the pupils Kindergarten songs and dramas. Subjects which were taught in the school at Yatung were also taught here. Besides the Tibetan language, Hindi and English were also taught to the children.



For the New Year's programme the children were drilled in the action songs and dramatics. For the occasion Tharchin invited parents, guardians, high officials and noble men. Some of the high officials had arrived from Lhasa to be trained as military officers under the British personnel. Changlo Chen Gung Kusho and Doring Thaiji were the officers of high rank and respect in the Tibetan Government. Kyepup and Deamon were minor officers.

The school was conducted in an empty rented building with the upper storey for the school accommodation and the lower storey serving as Tharchin's residence. The school had its own premises and a court-yard. The building was situated in a section of the town known as Changlo Nyingpa where the old and outmoded group of houses stood in a linear fashion on either side of the road.

On the day of inauguration, the school was named "Kun-Nang-Od-Sel," In short the name meant as follows:— Kun—all, Nang—to shine, Od—light and Sel—bright, that is, a "Light house". In a true sense of the word this humble institution founded by a humble servant of Christ Jesus was a light house of knowledge and learning. The inauguration day of the school was observed in the month of January, 1922.

On the occasion the children successfully staged the drama which Tharchin had taught them painstakingly. They also sang the action songs jubilantly,

loudly and enthusiastically. The performance of the children must have been a great joy to their parents and still greater to Tharchin, the founder and headmaster. After the termination of the function, subscriptions were solicited from the audience for the development of the school by way of furnishing needed equipment such as furniture, clock and a school bell. He recalls, "I still remember we raised a donation of over Rs. 100/-. With this amount we were able to purchase teaching aids such as maps, charts, and text-books for the children. The school, in short, was properly equipped with the essential requisites for an ideal institution. The school by the way consisted of two classes.

Later on the four officers, who were invited to attend the inaugural function requested Tharchin to teach them the Hindi Language. After New Year's day, daily and regularly, after the physical drill, they came to Tharchin to take lessons from him in Hindi. Thereafter the work of the school grew and the small institution began to show signs of development. Its fame spread in no time.

Due to the pressure of responsibilities Tharchin required an additional teacher and so he communicated the problem to Mrs. David Macdonald at Yatung. She kindly despatched a teacher, a former student of S. U. M. Institution to Gyantse. With the arrival of the new teacher the burden of the school was

much alleviated. Tharchin managed to pay the initial remuneration of Rs. 20/- per month for the teacher from his own resources. Later on the salary was paid from the donation solicited from Sadhu Sunder Singh who faithfully helped Tharchin. Tharchin himself received practically no pay. He did the work voluntarily and gladly.

According to the custom prevalent in the ancient times, the children would bring several useful articles which were more than sufficient for the personal needs. Sometimes Tharchin had nothing to eat but the Lord always miraculously provided his "Daily Bread" wonderfully and marvelously. Those days he must have recited the Lord's Prayer by heart on and off in times of need. All his personal requirements were met by God's grace and mercy.

Two of Tharchin's students were the sons (1) of Tharing Raja who was related to the Maharaja of Sikkim. Tharing Raja escaped to Tibet during the war between Sikkim and British. He never returned, and as a result of this he lost the throne

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(1) ... Later the eldest son came down to India for higher education and studied in a European institution. He married in Lhasa a girl already known as Mary Tsarong who was a daughter of a high Tibetan official Tsarong. Prior to her marriage when she came to India for further education in an English school, she was nicknamed as Mary Tsarong. Now both of them are in India and are highly useful for the service of the Tibetan Government in India.

although he was the legal heir to the throne of Sikkim. Due to recent political upheaval in Tibet one of Tharing Raja's sons came out to India as a refugee with the Dalai Lama. This son was appointed as the high ranking education minister in the Dalai Lama's cabinet. Another notable pupil in Tharchin's school was a son of Chokte Kusho a nobleman who also has come down to India as a refugee.

The children of Tharing Raja and Chokte Kusho would bring Tsampa, meat, butter and cheese from time to time for the teachers just as in the ancient times the disciples used to bring the essential commodities for their Guru or teacher. In other words, the tuition fees were both in cash and kind.

As a result of Tharchin's concrete contribution to the community Gung Kusho and Doring Thaijee became friendly with him. Gung Kusho who was a senior officer in rank and respect extended an invitation to Tharchin to stay with him. Therefore, he went and spent sometime with him although most of the time Tharchin stayed with Doring Thaijee. Gung Kusho was a greatly renowned scholar in the field of Tibetan language and literature, Especially, in the department of poetry and grammar his scholarship was unquestionable. Tharchin endeavoured to learn from him about some of the salient features of Tibetan literature. Tharchin remarks, "His style was simple

and sweet at the same time." Tharchin tried to learn from other scholars also as much as he could which was his partial aim of visiting Tibet.

At Gyantse Tharchin conducted the daily school session with morning prayer, Christian hymns and Bible readings. He also conducted a Sunday school every week. The school walls were decorated with Bible texts and posters. Scripture verses and texts were displayed at the vantage points where students and visitors could easily read them. Many Lamas and monks saw the Scripture texts and they seemed pleased to read them, at least, judging from their outward appearance. There was no objection or protest of any sort from any quarter against such outright presentation of Christian Religion in a Buddhist country. Tharchin, in this way, got many opportunities to witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. (2)

While he was heading the institution at Gyantse, Rev. Mackenzie, the then Tibetan Missionary, came

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(2)..... Tharchin always mentioned the references below the Scripture texts. One day a learned Lama, also a scholar and a head of the monastery enquired of Tharchin regarding the original sources for the Bible references. Tharchin showed him the Tibetan New Testament from which he had quoted the Bible verses. The head Lama borrowed the Tibetan New Testament and after thoroughly reading it through passed it on to others who had seen it in the hand of the Head Lama and were interested to look through the Christian Book. Thus after three or four months of lapse the copy of the Tibetan New Testament came back to Tharchin.

to Gyantse on a trip. There he visited the school and was very much pleased to see the good work Tharchin was carrying on among the children for the sake of Christ. The pupils sang several Christian songs and hymns which delighted the missionary a great deal. After the programme Rev. Mackenzie and Tharchin prayed together. Tharchin comments, "It was a blessed time of fellowship in the Lord." Two or three months after the return trip from Tibet Rev. Mackenzie retired for good and left for his homeland of Scotland.

The Lamas often asked pertinent questions of Tharchin. They asked, "What is your religion? Whom do you worship?" They put these questions to him as they noted the absence of images, incense, water-offering, pictures of gods and goddesses in his room. They designated Buddhists as "Nangpas" that is, the Inner Ones and the Non-Buddhists they termed as "Chipas", that is, the Outer Ones. Tharchin replied, "I am a Nangpa." They questioned, "You have no images as we have, so how can you call yourself a Nangpa?" Tharchin answered, "I am a Nangpa but you are Chipa." This paradoxical statement puzzled them no less than it pained them. Tharchin explained the apparent contradiction by saying, "I do everything from inside my heart or spirit, so I am a Nangpa. You do everything with the help of external objects such as images or water, so you are chipa." This sort of conversation must have often sparked

off the debate, but Tharchin is no mean debator.

Some of the religious leaders observed a few peculiarities about Tharchin's way of life. They pointed out, "You do not touch drink at all when you are invited for a feast by the noblemen. We see that you are different from other people." Tharchin replied, "This is my religion and I try to conform to the social practice and religious tenets of my faith. My conduct should conform to my Christian creed." The Lamas seemed to be satisfied and pleased with this reply. Tharchin was also doubly happy to know that in this way he could avail himself of the chances to testify through his life and conduct for the crucified and the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Many people invited Tharchin for the social feasts. As a result of these invitations he developed many contacts and acquaintances. His circle of friendship began to grow wider and wider day by day. This brought more social functions for him and with them trying temptations also. On these occasions drinks were served, but Tharchin refused to enjoy them. Although the girl-servants compelled him to drink still he declined to touch the wine container. None but Daniel of old could have sympathised with him and his problem in such crucial situation. The servant girls even pricked him with needles still his resolution did not falter. He stayed strong and adamant in his determination. Later he was left to himself and nobody bothered him any longer over

the drink of wine. What a testimony for the Lord in a strange land! Instead, hereafter, he was served with tea and he drank it by thousands of cups. Tharchin, not sophistically but theologically and humbly comments, "Once we yield to a temptation, it makes it doubly difficult for one to withstand the second temptation next time. I can testify that my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ enabled me to triumph over these trials and temptations to stand true to Him, otherwise I am no better than other individuals."

The officers who had come from Lhasa to Gyantse now completed their tenure of training after about the span of two years. On several occasions they suggested, even encouraged, Tharchin to start a school at Lhasa for the general public welfare. They promised every possible assistance for the establishment of the educational institution.

Just about this time Major Bailly, the then political officer, came to Gyantse. He was very happy to hear about the plan and a proposed-visit by Tharchin to Lhasa. By the way Major Bailly was very happily surprised when Tharchin recalled the Major's one time visit to Poo in the year 1905. At that time Tharchin was just a young adolescent of fifteen years of age. The revival of old memories had an electrifying effect on this stern-looking British officer and he relented for a moment. His stony attitude completely changed and he became friendly towards



Tharchin. Commenting gladly on Tharchin's trip to Lhasa he said, "Teach them horse polo at Lhasa."

In the following year (1924) it was proposed that a new school be opened in Gyantse as a result of joint efforts by the Tibetan Government and the British Government. With respect to this school Major Bailly remarked to Tharchin, "You applied for the teaching post which has been already given to a teacher from Darjeeling. In the future we shall keep your application in mind." Tharchin with no sting in his words says, "I opened their eyes to the need of education and the necessity of establishing a school in Gyantse."

Finally, after committing the school at Gyantse to the custody of the assistant teacher, Tharchin along with the four Tibetan officers left Gyantse in the first week of September for Lhasa the city of the gods and the Vatican of Tibet.



## CHAPTER 13

FIRST VISIT TO TIBET [CONCLUDED] :—FINDING A FIANCEE  
"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth a favour  
of the LORD"  
Proverbs 18 : 22

During the first week of September Tharchin left Gyantse on the forward journey to the city of Lhasa. With reference to this trip he remarks, "This was a real answer to my prayers for years. For this I thank the Lord from the inner core of my heart." For many years he had longed to see Lhasa, the principal city in Tibet about which he had read and heard so much. Indeed he must have been overjoyed at the first sight of the ancient city. Its glittering roofs at the far off distance must have brought sacred thoughts in his mind as is the case when one stands vis-a-vis a sublime object. Sublimity has its intrinsic elevating effect upon the human soul which is lifted upwards into the realms of purity and sincerity. With the sight of the great city he must have felt great. This is a natural sentiment.

Tharchin accompanied the Tibetan officials who had gone to Gyantse for undergoing the military training but now after its completion were returning to Lhasa the headquarters of the Tibetan Government. On their way as they were approaching the capital

the military officials first went straight to the summer palace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to pay their respects to him and thereafter started off for their residence in Lhasa proper.

At Lhasa every day for a month Tharchin enjoyed sumptuous feasts and dinners with the officials. As during the feasts in Gyantse so also here they tried to compel him to take drinks but he resolutely refused to touch it as he intended to testify for the Lord through his life even in the city of Lhasa. Very likely he may have put on extra weight as a result of enjoying fine preparations and daily dainty dishes.

Tharchin lodged with Doring Thaiji whose residence was right in the heart of the town. It was located very close to the sacred cathedral namely, Tsuglag Khang and to the west of it. This holy cathedral is one of the most famous spots in the whole of Tibet. It is one of the most celebrated monasteries in the land. Gautama Buddha's image cast of an alloy is enshrined here. It is believed to have been shaped during the lifetime of Buddha himself and that again in India the land of his birth.

An Indian emperor presented it to the emperor of China. When the Chinese princess married the Tibetan king Song-Tsen-Gampo she carried this image with her to Lhasa. The other image of Buddha was

brought by the princess of Nepal who married the same Tibetan king first. For some unknown reason the image brought by the Chinese princess is valued as more important than the other image.

Since the fame of the sacred monastery had spread far and wide, Tharchin was very eager to seek an entrance into the monastery to view its beautiful interior. As a matter of fact since his maiden visit to the monastery he had entered it on several occasions. While everybody was engaged in praying the Buddhist formula of worship "Om Mani Padme Hun" (1) Tharchin was also busily engaged in offering his prayers. Lest one might misunderstand him, he is quick to clarify saying, "I prayed the Lord's prayer and prayed it loudly too." Other devotees prostrated themselves before the image but he avoided this as he was prevented by his religion from bowing down to any graven images.

With respect to this sacred monastery people in general entertain a superstition regarding the efficacy of its blessings. It is believed that after visiting the temple one's heart's desire whatsoever that might be will be fruitful or fulfilled. Tharchin affirms, "I do not subscribe to this sort of

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(1).....The formula has been explained in many ways giving it connotation from philosophical to mystical dimensions. In general and popularly it is understood to mean OM—O ! Mani—Gem Padme—Lotus Hun—in

superstition. On the other hand, I prayed that some day this particular cathedral might be converted into the Church of God and that the Kingdom of Christ might reign in the hearts of men."

Tharchin sighted a metallic bell hanging from the roof of the entrance to the innermost part of the shrine. The pendulum was tied to the bell with a piece of leather cord. The people rang the bell while stepping in and out of the sanctum. Latin words were inscribed on the bell meaning "God is Love." In the past he had read about the description of this bell in a book. Now his personal experience confirmed the truth of the statement. He says, "I felt the monastery was like a picturesque museum. Images of many noble and notable personalities are enshrined here. Besides, several archaic and ancient artifacts are preserved in the monastery. Above all, the bell hangs in the temple ever proclaiming the most powerful witness for Christ. God's word though inscribed in Latin silently continues to testify in the sanctuary of the sacred shrine of the Tibetans."

Tharchin reports, "I saw the site of the church which was constructed by the early Roman Catholic missionaries to Lhasa. The building was not there, not even a sign of a stone of it. However, the site stands as proof that once upon a time the gospel of Christ was preached by the godly missionaries to the Tibetan nation. On one occasion, a devastating

deluge swept through the region. As it moved northwards it neared the metropolis of Lhasa and even threatened to submerge it. Consequently a colossal damage was done to life and property. Immediately some of the Lamas found a pretext and they began to accuse the foreign missionaries saying that the flood was due to their undesirable presence in Tibet. But the then Prime Minister was an intelligent, kind and considerate person. Since he wanted to be good to the missionaries he took every precaution to avert the danger to their lives by holding the natural meteorological forces responsible for the giagantic flood disaster and rightly so." It should be noted that the Roman Catholic missionaries were never turned out of the country by the then Tibetan Government. The missionaries themselves after leaving Tibet preferred not to come back due to financial reasons or difficulties of their own.

Tharchin found his fiancée in Lhasa. Of this romance he offers a charming version. He says, "I was in Tibet for more than two years still I had given no thought to finding a companion for my life. Even the people around me noted my unconcern along this line." But the day dawned and Tharchin became the star of the epic. After all, he was on the safe side for the Bible says, "And the LORD God said, it is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an helpmate

for him." (2)

Two houses faced each other at about the distance of ten yards. The house on the opposite side had small windows. He remarks, "One day I happened to look in the direction of the house on the opposite side. I saw a girl. She was looking at me. The stare did not scare me. I turned. She also turned. I hid. She also hid. I stepped forward. She also stepped forward." This episode was repeated several times. He guessed the logic. It was unmistakable no less than it was inevitable. With every passing day the reciprocal exchanges between the lovers increased and the sentiment of love developed deeper and deeper. He calls it, "Love by Look." He sent for her through his servant whom he had brought with him from Gyantse. The damsel obliged and obeyed. He conversed with her for a short while. He asked her, "Why were you looking here?" She answered, "I have been always trying to meet you but you looked elsewhere."

Then the girl recounted a strange experience. She narrated, "Before your arrival in Lhasa I had dreamt of a person whose dress and appearance I still recall. When thousands of people were cordially welcoming the Tibetan officials who were returning from Gyantse after the military training, I saw you in their company and recollected the dream."

Tharchin who is a simple and a sincere man says, "I believed her dream. In fact, now it is too late not to believe it. I proposed to her and asked her whether she would be willing to marry me and accompany me to a far off land of India." She replied, "I am willing to go with you. Furthermore, I would like to advise you to obtain my mother's prior permission as it is in keeping with our social custom."

After this, the lovely would-be bride surprised Tharchin with another similar strange experience. Its hypnotic effect on him was as mystifying as it was captivating. The girl recounted, "In another dream I saw somebody from the sky and a book coming from above the sky and hanging on the roof. The book was approaching nearer and nearer to my forehead. I was trying to get hold of it but it was trying to go away from me." Later the girl herself suggested that the book in the dream may have referred to the Holy Bible. When she saw Tharchin for the first time with the Tibetan military officials she was at once convinced of the fulfilment of the predictive message of the dream. He asked her, "Will you walk with me through water, fire, river or any other critical situation of life? Will you follow my religion?" The girl answered all the questions affirmatively and unreservedly. After this probing conversation and much prayer he made up his mind and determined to choose this particular girl as the



ideal, God-sent and God-willed partner for his life. The choice was made. The Rubicon was crossed.

Tharchin consulted the Tibetan official with whom he was staying in Lhasa. He wanted to get the official's viewpoint. The Tibetan official was very happy and he welcomed the proposal wholeheartedly. He despatched his chief servant with scarves and presents to ask the mother who agreed to the proposal readily and joyfully. Her consent was complete.

In this way, as per the standing social custom the explicit consent and consultation of the right parties was obtained before hand through proper procedures. The girl willingly offered to leave Lhasa and her loved ones to accompany her fiancée to the distant land of India. Her willingness reminds one of Rebekah who left her country and kindred to become the bride of Isaac. These are miraculous cases and the credit must be given to the Lord alone.

In the year 1923 Tharchin went to Lhasa on the initiative of the Tibetan officials who wanted him to start a school there. But the same officials whom he accompanied were now ordered by the Dalai Lama to proceed to India for more specialised training. So the officials suggested that Tharchin accompany them to India also. They advised him to postpone his plans to found the school in Lhasa

till after returning from India.

Just around this time, about the month of November, 1923, Tharchin received a letter from Dr. Graham who advised him to return to Kalimpong. As per the contents of the correspondence Rev. Mackenzie had retired and none had replaced him to look after the spiritual needs of the Tibetan congregation. Tharchin was as much interested in the evangelization of Tibet as he was interested in the pastoral care of the Tibetan congregation in Kalimpong. These considerations impressed on him the need to return back to India as speedily as possible.

On the way back he stopped at Gyantse to take stock of the school which he himself had founded. He decided to close down the school for two reasons. First, he could not be there any more in person to supervise the general administration and second, he did not hope to go back to Gyantse, at least, not in the near future. Ultimately the school folded up and its doors of learning were closed in the month of February, 1923. The deputed assistant teacher went back to Yatung and resumed his former teaching profession there.

On the return journey Tharchin must have been one of the most joyous men on earth. He says, "I conducted a Bible school for my fiancée on the back of the pony, that is to say, while riding the

pony I coached her concerning the important articles of the Christian Faith. She could recite by heart :- The Lord's Prayer, The Ten Commandments and the Apostles' Creed.

From Gyantse the party proceeded to Kalimpong. From here they travelled down to Siliguri in the plains. Tharchin went with the Tibetan officials to Calcutta. In the meanwhile during the temporary separation arrangements were made for his fiancée to stay with miss Kempe (3) who kindly went down

(3).....Ani Kempe was a very devout and godly missionary. Originally she worked with the Scandinavian Alliance Mission at Ghoom. After the administrative changes in the Mission she worked independently in Kurseong, Kalimpong and Pedong areas. The older generations around these places fondly remember her with great appreciation and they often comment on her selfless and sacrificial service to the people. Finally she bought a piece of land above Pedong Bazar and constructed a single-storey building for residential purposes as well as for the weaving industry. A water tank was built near the house since water scarcity was a big problem. Rain water was collected in this tank. Besides it was also used for baptism.

Even to this day people remark that she never sent a visitor away empty-handed without offering something to a person as a gift. Sometimes she used to give away her vegetable to others and herself would go hungry. According to a very reliable source one day she took off her shoes and gave them away to a needy person.

Ani Kempe used to walk on foot for long distances. Her spirit of sacrifice was astounding. Very faithfully through many sufferings she preached the gospel of Christ to Tibetans and others in that

to Siliguri to receive the girl. Next day Ani Kempe and the girl returned to Kurseong.

By the end of March Tharchin came back to Kurseong while the officials proceeded directly to Darjeeling. They spent a few days in Darjeeling with the intention of later leaving for the city of Shillong for still higher training. During the interval of few days arrangements were made for the water-baptism of Tharchin's fiancée.

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+ Rev. Kelly then was the missionary who was stationed in Darjeeling. On the appointed day all the preparations were in order and for the occasion several friends from Ghoom and Darjeeling arrived in Kurseong. There was a wonderful gathering and a fellowship of believers against the lovely background of natural beauty of the Himalayan range and the snow-covered peaks far off. The fiancée was immersed under the fast flowing stream in the peaceful hills. He thinks, "I believe she was the first Tibetan lady convert from Lhasa proper to be baptised in India." Tharchin who was much impressed and naturally so by the baptismal ceremony says that the occasion was inspiring. The Tibetan officials were represented by their deputies who witnessed the Christian rite of baptism for the first time in their life.

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area. Her memory is gratefully revered and remembered by the national Christians. Indeed her life and conduct was an example of practical Christianity. Since her departure there has not been second like her.

He described the event in still greater details. He observed, "A small tent was pitched in the vicinity of a running stream. After the girl removed her old clothings, she put on a long white gown symbolic of the purity of heart being washed by the precious blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Small weights were attached to the border of the gown all around in order to hold it under the water preventing it from rising to the surface. After a few catechetical questions and answers which the girl assented to positively and affirmatively, she was immersed in the cool waters of the stream; the act of immersion reminding her of her conformity with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. The calmness of the contemplative hills was only once disturbed by the reverberating echoes of the Christian hymn "There is a Fountain Filled with Blood" which is sung traditionally after the emergence of the recepint from the water. The ceremony was minutely watched by the deputies of the Tibetan officials and many other representatives and friends who showered lovely presents and milk-white scarves upon the beautiful bride."

After the baptismal ceremony Tharchin a convinced Presbyterian and Karma Dechhen a staunch Baptist were united in holy matrimony by Rev. J. Kelly of the Tibetan Mission, Darjeeling. The wedding was officiated in the residence of Ani Kempe. The bride was gorgeously and beautifully attired for the occasion.

She combed her hair according to the Tibetan style. She did not wear any ear-rings. A lovely photograph was snapped.

Later when the Tibetan officials saw the wedding photograph, one of them complained to Tharchin about the absence of ear-rings on the bride's person. Tharchin said, "I did not have ear-rings with me at the time." Thereupon the Tibetan official flared up saying, "Why did you not tell me about this earlier. If you had told me in advance I would have borrowed my wife's ear-ring and given them to Karma Dechhen for the occasion." Though it was too late, just the same the good-will on the part of this Tibetan official was highly appreciated.

Hereafter the Tibetan officials who by this time were still in Darjeeling spending their leisure time as profitably as possible, decided to move on to Shillong for the training in the technicalities of their field. Tharchin also took along his wife to Shillong for one month and later bringing her back and leaving her in Kurseong with Ani Kempe, proceeded to Shillong again. After completion of their course of studies the Tibetan officials returned again to Darjeeling and lodged in building near the railway station. They spent the month of July there.

In the year 1924 when Tharchin was walking through the streets of Shillong he saw posters announcing special meetings for which Sadhu

Sunder Singh was the special featured speaker. Tharchin, a historian by taste and aptitude, noted the dates of the meetings carefully and recorded them in his diary. He enquired from the local pastor regarding the details of the meetings and especially whereabouts of Sadhuji.

Sunder Singh addressed a mammoth gathering in the public maidan (ground). Thousands and thousands of people flocked to hear the sermon of Sadhu Sunder Singh, the great Indian Christian saint. After the public address Tharchin met Sunder Singh at the pastor's lodge. He met him again in a church where Sadhuji was conducting prayer meeting. Both were very happy to meet each other after an interval of three years since they met at Agra in 1921. Ever since his first friendship with Sunder Singh in 1906 Tharchin had maintained with him regular correspondence and as a result of this continual contact Sunder had known about Tharchin's school at Gyantse and his marriage in Kurseong. In the course of their conversation Tharchin told him that Dr. Graham had asked him (Tharchin) to come to Kalimpong to help with Tibetan church work and so he was not going back to Tibet.

For several reasons Tharchin decided to stay in Kalimpong and not to return to Tibet at least for some time. So he declined to accompany the Tibetan officials back to Lhasa. As a result of this declination the proposal to found a school in Lhasa

as intended before could never be achieved. In fact, it was abandoned for good.

Instead Tharchin managed to send another young man with the Tibetan officials. This particular young man Sonam Tobgay had read up to matric which those days was considered a good education. His original home was the village of Algarah near Kalimpong. He died later in a catastrophic flood which overtook Gyantse in the year 1954. By the way his sister Yangzom is still one of the prominent members of Tharchin's Tibetan congregation in Kalimpong.

On the 15th of August, 1924 Tharchin joined the Church of Scotland Mission work in Kalimpong.





## CHAPTER 14

## THE TIBETAN CHURCH AT KALIMPONG

".....Feed my lambs.....Feed my sheep"

John 21:15-16

The evangelistic activity is the expression of the living Church. The evangelization of the perishing world has been one of the stupendous tasks confronting the Christian church of all times. Repeatedly the Christian church, the Bride of Christ, has made attempts under the most trying hardships and difficulties to take the saving gospel of Christ to the ends of the world, especially to the lands closed to the gospel of Christ. The great servants of God down through the ages have forsaken their motherlands and loved ones and with them the riches and the pleasures of the world with the single purpose of proclaiming Christ to the people bound by the chains of superstitions and false beliefs. No wonder then that both the Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries have struggled to preach the gospel even in the land of Tibet also. With this definite aim in view the Moravian Mission of Germany (originally reconstituted by a nobleman Count Zinzendorf (1) of Herrnhut) established

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(1) 'Nicolaus Ludwig, Graf Von Zinzendorf, was born in Dresden, on May 26, 1700.....Even as a boy he was marked by the two traits which always characterised his religious life:—passionate personal devotion to Christ and the conviction

Mission Centres in Leh (2) in Ladakh, Keylang (3) in Lahul and Poo, now in Himachal Pradesh. The galaxy of great missionaries who laboured in these fields, to mention a few, were Jasche, (4) Hyde, (5) Schreve, Schnabell, Kunich and Dr. Mark. As a result of these gospel centres many Tibetans had opportunities to hear of the redeeming love of Christ. Besides, the Moravian Mission enjoys also the special honour to have given to the Tibetans the translation of the New Testament (later complete Bible) into

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that God is only known as Christ, at least, in Christianity..... Zinzendorf allowed them (the German-speaking Moravians) to found a village on his Berthlesdorf estate, which they named Herrnhut and where they collected in considerable numbers." (For above statements and more details on the part played by Count Zinzendorf in the History of the Moravian Church, consult;— A History of the Christian Church by Williston Walker, P P. 501 ff; published by T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1953 )

(2) The translation of the Tibetan Bible was carried on and completed in Leh [Ladakh] and Germany. New Testament was printed in two volumes in Berlin, i.e., four gospels in Vol. I and the rest of the books in Vol. II. Complete Bible was translated in 1940 and Litho-printing was finished in 1946-47.

(3) The Moravian Mission installed a Litho Printing Press in Keylang which turned out Biblical books, Christian Literature and School text books.

(4) Jasche was a great scholar in the department of Philology and Classical languages. He composed the first standard Tibetan Dictionary.

(5) Hyde went to Ghoom to revise the Ghoom edition of the Tibetan New Testament.

the Tibetan language. Perhaps this is the greatest contribution of the German church to the Tibetan nation.

The history of the Tibetan church in Kalimpong is as interesting as the history of the Moravian church on the northern frontiers of India. Rev. Mackenzie may be rightly regarded as the father and the first founder of the Tibetan work in Kalimpong. In commemoration to their original contribution bronze plates (6) have been inscribed and dedicated to the revered memory of Rev. and Mrs. Mackenzie. The plates are placed inside the Macfarlane Memorial Church whose annexe serves as the venue for the Sunday morning worship of the Tibetan church to this day. Now the entire church administration has been brought within the jurisdiction of the Church of North India.

Originally Rev. Mackenzie arrived in India with the specific intention of seeking entry into Tibet in order to proclaim the Christian gospel there. At first he ministered as an independent missionary under "Miss Annie Taylor's Pioneer Tibetan Mission Band". Since he could not proceed further he remained stationed in Pedong. There he continued

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(6) Bronze Plate I reads:— "In affectionate memory of the Rev. Evan Mackenzie, missionary to the Tibetans 1894-1924."

Bronze Plate II reads ;— "In loving memory of Mrs. Evan Mackenzie devoted missionary to the Tibetans from 1894-1917."

to labour among the Tibetan traders and muleteers with the Christian message. Usually the late arriving traders and muleteers halted at Pedong for overnight rest, food and fodder for the ponies and mules.

Later on Dr. Graham asked Rev. Mackenzie to come over to Kalimpong and commence the ministry among the Tibetan population here. Thus Rev. Mackenzie formally joined the Church of Scotland Mission and continued to minister to the Tibetans in the area. He undertook a home visitation programme. This brought him good response from the Tibetan people as several of them had already been acquainted with him due to his residence and evangelistic activities among the Tibetans in Pedong. They were impressed with his good work and sacrificial service. The present Tibetan Mission House was then built for his accommodation.

The coming of the Tibetans to Kalimpong in large numbers must be attributed to certain historical events. In 1910 the Thirteenth Dalai Lama fled from Tibet. During those days he remained as a refugee in Darjeeling as the British Government in India granted him an asylum. The Dalai Lama returned to Tibet in 1912 when the appropriate political arrangements were made for his safe conduct to Lhasa. Plans were also finalised for the Chinese to evacuate Tibet as they were being turned out of the country. According to the agreement and

arrangements Chinese soldiers were to return to China via India (1914). As they were evacuating many Tibetans who were their relatives by marriage and friends also came along here with them. The Government erected some huts to accommodate them temporarily at Topkhana (7). Realising the need of the people who settled down here permanently Rev. Mackenzie built some huts to give them timely shelter as they had no other place to stay. He erected more than a dozen thatched huts just below the Tibetan Mission Compound where the needy and deserving Tibetans could shelter themselves from sun, rain and storm.

Some of these Tibetans were employed in the industrial complex (popularly known as Kalimpong Arts and Crafts) founded by Catherine Graham, the wife of Dr. J. A. Graham, as some of the Tibetan and Chinese artists were quite skilful carpenters. Some of the women folk were excellent weavers who engaged in knitting. Others dealt in making and selling Tibetan eatables like 'Khapses' and Ground Nut sweets known as 'Badam Mitthai'. In this way part of the incoming population took to

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(7) During the British military Mission to Tibet in 1904-5 (also known as Younghusband Expedition) war weapons and canons were stockpiled at a place above the eleventh mile in Kalimpong suburb. In Hindi language canon is called 'Top' and store is called 'Khana' and so the name 'Topkhana' was coined. The name is in vogue even today.

business and commerce. As a result some of them became successful in their occupation which brought them an excellent income. Some became quite rich and influential. Those who lived in the huts built by the Mission worked in the industry and attended the Sunday church services regularly and voluntarily. There was no compulsion or coercion. Out of these regular attendants from forty to fifty persons were baptised on request and thus they were added to the fellowship of the church. Rev. Mackenzie looked after their spiritual needs. He was assisted by a Tibetan convert who belonged to a well-bred and a respectable family in Tibet. As Simon was called Peter so this convert formerly known as Jhola Ngodup was later christened as Yishui Jhola (8).

As noted above, Rev. Mackenzie founded, laboured and retired from the Tibetan work. By the time Tharchin came on the scene, Rev. Mackenzie had gone on furlough for good. Actually Tharchin joined the Mission work on the 15th of August, 1924. Thus during the one year absence of Rev. Mackenzie the spiritual condition of the Tibetan congregation had deteriorated to a deplorable degree. Many Tibetan believers became scattered here

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(8) The suffix "La" in Tibetan language has honourific sense something like "JI" in Hindi. For example, Tharchin is always addressed in the public as "Tharchinla" while in Hindi he would be addressed as "Tharchinji"

and there. They were like a sheep without a shepherd. One Tibetan teacher who was employed in the S. U. M. Institution stayed in the church along with his family. Originally Rev. Mackenzie had engaged this teacher in a school which those days was conducted in the Polhill Hall. Later the school was shifted and amalgamated with S. U. M. Institution which automatically transferred the teacher also.

Some Christians stopped attending the church services. Others became backsliders and totally went back to their original faith, namely, Buddhism. The situation went from bad to worse. Some believers got into financial difficulties. One believer, especially, due to economic pressures pledged his sewing machine. When Tharchin heard of this he was very much grieved at heart. He went with the man and took the machine, out of the pledge and helped him to resume his business as before. This person was an elder in the Tibetan church who at times used to preach in the church. Yishui Jhola also used to conduct the services in the church as he was a catechist but he left the church fellowship long ago. What a painful picture !

Tharchin gradually encouraged the person who had earlier pledged his machine. He was helped to return to the church fellowship. After much prayer

and counselling this particular person and his family came back and continued to attend the church services regularly. Later both this person and his wife died in the Christian faith. They remained faithful until the end. Their son, his wife and children are still the members of the local church and take an active part in the church programmes.

Yishui Jhola left the Mission work before the retirement of Rev. Mackenzie. Later he was employed as a copyist in Shantiniketan an institution founded by Rabindranath Tagore. After completing this assignment he returned to Kalimpong.

Tharchin conducted daily Bible classes in the Girls' High School for women and Tibetan workers of the industry. On Sundays they went to attend the church services. From time to time Tharchin used to show an old magic lantern at Topkhana and the tenth mile area. During those days these spots were full of Tibetans who came down to Kalimpong during the winter as traders and pilgrims. Besides, twice a week in the mornings, meetings were conducted for the leprosy patients in the local Mission Leprosy Asylum.

Rev. Polhill donated a substantial sum to construct a gospel preaching hall which has been rightly named after him 'Polhill Hall'. It stands by the side of the main road in the centre of Kalimpong. It was dedicated for the ministry among the Tibetans. Rev. Polhill



visited Kalimpong in the year 1926. He was considered as one of the seven stars among the Christian missionaries sent out by the China Inland Mission. On this visit which was his first, he saw Polhill Hall, a concrete expression of his love and gift for the Tibetan people. He had Tibetan food and tea with Tharchin and his family who then were residing in the Polhill Hall.

After departing from Kalimpong Rev. Polhill sent a new magic lantern (9) to Dr. Graham to be utilised for the ministry among the Tibetan people. Dr. Graham turned over the machine to Tharchin for the purpose.

Many people especially Tibetans attended the magic lantern shows in the open air. Some of them became curious and wanted to know the mechanics of the magic lantern and the phonograph to see whether and how a man could enter the machine to sing the songs or to preach the gospel message so clearly and loudly.

Several times national Christians and missionaries have wondered why the evangelistic efforts among the Tibetans over the years have brought little of spiritual fruit. In the past missionary after missionary

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(9) In all there were three magic lanterns:—1) Dr. Sutherland's own magic lantern which was used in Bhutan. 2) Old Mission magic lantern and 3) The New Magic lantern which was donated to the Mission by Rev. Polhill.

from different denominations has come to the hills to work among the Tibetans. Some have made a few converts here or there while others have left the field as they have failed to see any tangible results to their prayers and labours. The time and money involved in the venture did not justify their residence here any longer, so at least, some thought. But there are a few faithful ones who have carried on the gospel ministry as best as possible looking to the Lord alone and remaining loyal to their original pledge. Such have walked not by sight but by faith in the promises of the Lord, despite failures and slow results. They have continued to testify to the Tibetans in the hope that some day the Lord will honour His Word and reap a rich harvest for His glory and honour. Indeed, "The just shall live by faith."

I asked Tharchin to comment on the causes of fruitlessness among the Tibetans as far as the conversions to Christianity are concerned in view of the colossal efforts which have been put forth already in the evangelization of Tibetans. His penetrating analysis may be of educative value for the incoming generations who may stay clear of the mistakes and the disorders of the past and adopt or adapt such measures or remedies which may bring lasting fruit for Christ from among the Tibetans.

In reply to my query, Tharchin said, "First, the Tibetans are deeply rooted and grounded in the teachings and traditions of their original faith, namely, Buddhism. The Buddhist philosophy, its way of life and thought-patterns are deeply ingrained in the Tibetan temperament. Buddhism has certain strong rational and logical foundations which an average layman cannot easily resist or refute. Its appeal to their minds is captivating. Second, the conversion from Buddhism to Christianity entails excommunication from social rights and privileges. This ushers in persecution which very few can face boldly in order to remain loyal to the Christian faith. Often threats and intimidations compel a person to change the place or the locality which involves certain difficulties. Third, in general people can be divided into three classes: the rich, the middle and the poor. The rich neither care for their own religion nor for the religion of others. They are satisfied with external formalism and nominal ritualism. The middle class do not take religions seriously. The poor readily accept any religion for material or monetary gains. They tend to compromise saying that all religions are same. This implies that a Tibetan convert to Christianity should be grounded in the basic Biblical truths, that he should have an average permanent employment to maintain his livelihood and that he should be engaged in the evangelistic outreach which will develop the spirit

of witnessing and therewith the attitude to take one's religion seriously."

Any way, to continue the history, Tharchin did all he possibly could do to bring back the scattered believers into an united Christian fellowship once again. The Bible says, " ...He that winneth souls is wise." Some critically complained against a few prominent personalities who were at the helm of the church affairs. Tharchin reasoned with them and advised them not to pay any attention to the human beings but to look to Christ alone as He is the Captain of our salvation. He also introduced and continued to conduct open-air meetings on market days. He says, "More often than not the gramophone was my best companion to sing the songs or to preach the gospel messages to the crowds. The machine never suffered from any shyness or nervousness, cold or cough." He also conducted midweek prayer meetings in Polhill Hall in order to strengthen the believers in the Christian faith. He helped some Christians to get an employment. He managed to obtain free scholarships for the children of the poor families so that they might get free education in the schools. The cumulative result of these remedial measures kindled a new life and unity in the Tibetan congregation and once again the assembly became conscious of its magnitude and the responsibilities in the total

programme of the church.

Rev. Mackenzie left for furlough at the end of 1923. Thereafter for five years there was no Tibetan missionary to look after the spiritual needs of the congregation. This is one of the reasons why the spiritual condition of the congregation worsened. During this interval Dr. Graham managed the affairs of the Tibetan church. Tharchin carried on the work of the church in consultation with Dr. Graham, who was the first moderator of the Tibetan Kirk Session.

Dr. Knox arrived in the year 1928. Both Tharchin and Dr. Knox had certain plans which they wanted to implement for the benefit of the Tibetan church. First, they wanted to start an orphanage for the poor and the deserving children but it did not materialise. Second, they wanted to start a Christian Inn for the Tibetan traders and pilgrims who could avail themselves of the shelter in the inn and also could hear about the gospel of Christ. The plan again failed. Third, Tharchin wanted to settle the Tibetan Christians on a plot of land but this also could not be carried out as other plans because of the lack of vision, faith and co-operation from the higher authorities. The present trend of events proves the correctness of the wisdom and far-sightedness on the part of Tharchin and Dr. Knox. They had the right ideas

and their thinking was correct. This on the other hand proves the lack of correct judgement and concern on the part of the then authorities.

Dr. Knox an Australian missionary and Tharchin have been indeed great assets to the Tibetan church but their grand efforts were vitiated as the authorities could not see eye to eye with their proposals. Dr. Knox also deserves credit for having opened the 11th mile Tibetan dispensary which is still there. Some wanted to stop this dispensary also but ultimately Dr. Knox prevailed upon the opposing forces. Needless to mention that like the Scottish missionaries Rev. and Mrs. Mackenzie, Dr. Knox also deserved bronze plate in the local Macfarlane Memorial church. Its absence so far is surprising. In fact funds are already collected by the Tibetan church for the purpose and plans are afoot to inscribe and install the plate to the sacred memory of Dr. Knox. All these missionaries have endeared themselves to the Tibetan church by their sacrificial service and therefore the Tibetan church congregation honours them with glowing tributes.

Over the years the Tibetan church in Kalimpong, perhaps slowly but steadily has grown and developed spiritually and organizationally. At present Tharchin is the ordained minister of the congregation. He is assisted by Elders and some members of his

congregation. (10) The congregation assembles every Sunday for prayer and worship. Important Christian festivals like Good Friday, Easter and Christmas are observed by this Little Flock with great joy, sense of unity and deep fellowship. The church members take an active part in the evangelistic work. Every year contributions are sent for the work of the Bible Society of India. Even the humble believers contribute their mite for the Lord's work. The mothers of the congregation adjust their own timings for monthly prayer meetings and fellowship.

The present congregation consists of a few Tibetan Christian families. Though few in number, they are faithful in spirit. Though small, they are alive. Of late some have tried to obliterate the existence of the Tibetan church still God has preserved it. Some of the members of the congregation are scattered abroad. Tharchin says, "This makes the Tibetan church worldwide." Some of the believers are in Tibet, China, Nepal, Bhutan and even in Hongkong. From time to time letters of love and concern are received from some of the believers. Tharchin observed, "There are some with whom we neither can communicate nor they with us. For such we only

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(10) 1) Tharchin's son, S. G. Tharchin 2) Napa Tshering  
3) Tshering Wangdi and 4) P. T. Rapgey.

pray and hope that they stand firm and strong in the Christian faith and that the Lord will protect them under the shadow of His wings. Some are scattered due to employment, transfer or some other business."

The prayers of Christians everywhere are earnestly solicited on behalf of the Tibetan church that by God's grace it may continue to develop in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. May it turn out to be a great witnessing agency under the guidance and the leadership of its ordained ministers both present and future.

After all, it is hoped that the Tibetan church in Kalimpong will keep its eyes ever open and oriented towards the Land of Tibet whose evangelization must be effected should God in His mercy and goodness grant the people of Tibet a golden opportunity to regain its freedom and independence once again in the stream of history. May His will be done.





## CHAPTER 15

THE BIRTH OF THE TIBETAN NEWSPAPER AND  
THE PRINTING PRESS

"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth but the word of our God shall stand forever."

Isaiah 40:8

The place and importance of a newspaper and a printing press in modern times can hardly be overestimated. Its incalculable service to the advancement of knowledge and technology needs no description. The information it disseminates to the ends of the world, the education it affords to millions of people can be easily judged by the impact newspapers, periodicals, magazines and books have made upon the masses. Without the printing press the victorious advance of the Renaissance and Reformation would have been as slow as a snail's progress. The significance and utility of such modern techniques and agencies was recognised by Tharchin long ago. He was surely ahead of his times. Fortunately the mechanical skill which he had picked up in Ambala and Delhi came in handy to help him realise his dream. He had always dreamed of starting a printing press of his own. When the opportunity came to his door, he caught it by the forelock.

In 1925 Tharchin published the kind of first

Tibetan newspaper which lasted for many years.(1) His purpose was threefold:— cultural, journalistic and evangelistic.

First, he wanted to ameliorate cultural position of the Tibetans who in those days in great numbers had settled down in Kalimpong. They did not care to educate their children according to the standards of modern times. The parents did not take any precaution to preserve the mother tongue and with this attitude, quite naturally, they left the children to the fate of learning any language (excepting their own) that was the lingua franca of the locality or the neighbourhood. No thought was given for the maintainance of the heritage of the past. They did not even care to preserve their culture, historical traditions, or even the national dress. In this way he observed the gradual decadence and neglect of Tibetan customs and culture.

To salvage the situation from further deterioration, he went from home to home to enlighten the parents and the responsible leaders but they would not pay attention to his pleadings or suggestions. Some

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(1) Prior to Tharchin's newspaper twice attempts were made to publish a Tibetan newspaper from other places First, in the year 1903-4 during the Russo-Japanese war, Moravain missionaries published a Tibetan newspaper, "Ladakh Akhbar" from Leh Ladakh, by a Litho Printing process for two years. Second, in the year 1910-11 China published a Chinese-Tibetan mixed newspaper for a few years.

told him that it was useless to study the Tibetan language and literature. They presumed that the study of Tibetan would not help in the future. Some argued that since they were in India a working knowledge of English or Hindi was required to manage their daily affairs. Some thought that if their children learned English, they would have every hope of securing an employment in the industrial units or Government services. Reflecting on the cultural situation he observes, "I am a lover of Tibetan as it is my mother tongue, so I wanted to propagate it among others. With this in mind I started the Tibetan newspaper, but some remarked that because I was interested in propagating Christianity, I had started the Tibetan newspaper."

Second, he wanted the people of Tibet in general and the literate Tibetans in particular to know about the events and the happenings which were taking place around the world. In the far-off land of Tibet only newspaper could go and educate the people about modern social and political trends. He says, "Paper has wings. It can fly fast to any place in the world." Third, his primary objective in publishing the Tibetan newspaper was evangelistic. He wanted to use it as a media to publish expository articles or passages from the Bible to bring the gospel within the reach of the reading section of the Tibetan population. One must admit that on the

whole he was successful in attaining his cultural, journalistic and evangelistic goals.

But the problem was how to bell the cat, that is, how to start a Tibetan newspaper. He needed a printing press which he neither had nor could afford to buy. He often thought and wondered how he might make his vision an actuality. But the day dawned, an opportune moment arrived, and he was ready to take advantage of it.

One day he happened to visit Dr. Graham's office. The office was housed in the extant Anderson office building (2) located on the right side of the road going from the main bazar towards the hospital and facing the church. Inside the office he saw several clerks engaged in their duties. Some were recording while others were typing or stenotyping. As he was conversing with one of the staff members, he chanced to see a Roneo Duplicating Machine lying in the corner of the office. It had been lying there neglected. He made enquiries regarding the machine. The clerks informed him, "As we could not handle or operate this machine properly, we have just dumped it in the corner." The office staff had tried their level best to operate the machine but they had failed. Moreover, in the

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(2) The marble tablet reads: The Anderson Office, the gift of Miss H. R. Anderson, Deaconess of the church of Scotland, a life-long worker for the extension of Christ's Kingdom, 1907

attempt of making it workable, some parts of the machine had been spoiled or broken.

Suddenly the idea of starting a Tibetan newspaper which had been lying latent in the sub-conscious forced its way to the surface and got hold of Tharchin's determination. The brilliant idea of operating the machine to start the Tibetan newspaper caught his imagination. He made bold to approach Dr. Graham. (3) Tharchin said, "Sir, if you give me the machine, I will try it out." Dr. Graham very sympathetically replied, "My boy, your thought is an excellent one. All my workers have tried and failed. I doubt if you can handle it at all. "Still Tharchin who at times turns out to be strong-minded insisted saying, "Sir, if you give it to me, I will try to make it operate." Dr. Graham thought for a while and then gave a slip of paper to Tharchin to be given to the clerk in charge who was directed to hand over the Roneo Duplicating Machine to Tharchin (1925) and also all the materials connected with it.

The employees in the office turned over the machine, ink, a packet of stencils, a pen and a plate to Tharchin. Most of the workers scoffed at him commenting, "Why do you waste your precious time? You cannot do it. We tried so hard and we were

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(3) Dr. Graham's Homes, Kalimpong, an educational institution for the Anglo-Indians was founded by Dr. J. A. Graham.

unsuccessful. You will only waste your time. We are sure you will never make it work. You will never do it. The last sentence, "You will never do it" pierced Tharchin's heart like a hot iron and he was cut to the quick. In fact as he admits, these very words aroused his determination to accept the challenge of the words hurled at him. He started off right away in great earnest to overhaul the machine. He admits, "No one had taught me or trained me to handle the Roneo Duplicating Machine. I had not even seen such a machine before. If there was any instruction manual about it in the market, then, at least, I was ignorant of it. All along I had to struggle on my own."

He transported the machine to his residence in Polhill Hall. He kept on working with the thing day and night. He experimented with it from different angles. He bought paper and fed into the machine. In his endeavour he wasted three to four reams of paper. Even his family quarrelled with him saying, "You are wasting paper, money and time. You are not getting sufficient sleep. You are disturbing yourself and others around you." In spite of these adverse circumstances he determined not to give up his goal. One day he succeeded. His labours were crowned with victory. He produced a 4-page Tibetan newspaper. This maiden copy did not have a neat appearance. The lines were crooked. He says, "If

you would see that copy today you would laugh at it. I myself laugh at it when I think of its initial format. I have kept that copy somewhere."

After much trial and error, he succeeded in bringing out a better copy with greater improvement. Still he had to grapple with the machine for five to six weeks before he could produce a fair copy. When he took the first copy to Dr. Graham and said, perhaps with pride, "Sir, at last I have learned to handle the machine. Now it can be operated without any difficulty." Dr. Graham's first reaction was that of admiration for Tharchin who recalls, "When I first held the Tibetan newspaper before Dr. Graham, he looked at the paper and then he looked squarely in my face with surprise time and again. He patted me on my back and said, 'My boy, I congratulate you for this good work. At last you have succeeded'.

Thereafter, Dr. Graham led Tharchin to his office and showed the newspaper to the office staff. First turning to Tharchin and then to the clerks Dr. Graham recounted how Tharchin had produced a newspaper with the help of the Roneo Duplicator on which they had failed. On hearing Dr. Graham's commendation all the members of the staff sat silent without speaking a single word. After Dr. Graham left the office, Tharchin still lingered there for a few minutes and then facing the clerks he said, "Thank

you for your word, You will never do it'. These expressions pierced my heart and I set myself to work hard to prove that I could handle and operate the machine. "To be pious, one of the clerks brought out a certain part of the machine and handed it to Tharchin applogising for failing to give it earlier. It was only after this that Tharchin was aware of the existence of that part of the machine but he did not know why it had not been given to him before. Tharchin recalls having brought out the first copy of the Tibetan newspaper sometime in the year 1925.

With a sense of joy and triumph Tharchin mailed the copies of his first Tibetan newspaper to his friends at Yatung, Gyantse, Lhasa and other places but he posted a copy first to His Holiness the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. He received letter of appreciation and a gift of Rs. 20/- (now equivalent to Rs. 100/-) from the Dalai Lama (1926). Tharchin says that he has the letter from the Dalai Lama somewhere in his personal files. In the letter the Dalai Lama expressed his great admiration for Tharchin. Later on, when he personally met the Dalai Lama in Lhasa in 1927, His Holiness remarked, "I have always hoped that some day some one might bring out a printed Tibetan newspaper." He encouraged Tharchin to continue and keep up the good work. Tharchin with all his simplicity admits, "I felt humble before God when



I realised how people praised my sincere efforts to produce a Tibetan newspaper. The Dalai Lama and Dr. Graham spoke admirably about it. Both inspired me and advised me not to be discouraged but to press on. Some laughed and mocked at me saying, "How long will you work on that sort of machine and who will appreciate your efforts? The high Tibetan officials sympathetically endorsed me as they realised the power and the importance of a printed Tibetan newspaper for the future progress of Tibet. Some criticised me saying that I had started the paper to spread Christian propaganda. This was in the year 1926. After some time I began to print the paper monthly".

In the year 1930 there was depression and unemployment all over Europe and America. In view of this worldwide situation Tharchin published a small article in his newspaper on the subject: "Why unemployment in the world?" He treated the topic from the religious and political angles. Later he received a newspaper cutting, perhaps from the New York Times, with the caption, "A lonely editor in Tibet finds a solution to unemployment."

In the article Tharchin advanced the argument that manual labour should be used instead of machinery. Prior to the introduction of machines hundreds of people received employment, but now as a result of the machinery age only two or

three persons are required to handle the work otherwise done by a hundred persons. Some readers evinced interest in Tharchin's comments. Others were critical of his argument. He received dozens of letters pro and con. Some said, "You have really found a solution to the problem of unemployment. Please write more along the same lines." Others retorted, "This is the age of machinery. How can you do without a machine?" Tharchin says that he had the copies of these letters stacked somewhere but all of them are rotten by now.

He especially remembers the last correspondent who responded to his discussion of the subject from the Biblical viewpoint. Jesus told his disciple Peter to put the sword into the sheath. In other words, Peter was ordered by Christ not to fight with weapons. Tharchin falls back upon the words of Christ to buttress his case against the use of machines or weapons. He confronts his opponents with the words, "You are manufacturing the machines. Put the machines into sheath. If not the machines will kill you." In reply to this some referred to the motor vehicles or railway engines. Tharchin says, "I am not against such goodwill machines. I am against producing deadly weapons. These deadly weapons will come back to their manufacturers with striking power. There is a Tibetan proverb

which says, 'With goat's hair you make a sling to hit the goat ! The deadly weapons will similarly boomerang against their designers and makers.'

Tharchin concludes, "If those people who opposed my arguments were alive today they would have repented. They would have admitted the truth of my statements. Take for example the case of the atom bomb. Every one is afraid of it even the manufacturer himself."

The reader may decide for himself what side he may wish to take in this debate. However one thing is sure that according to the discussion Tharchin is not opposed to the production of machines which are constructively useful for the industrial and ethical progress of society. He is sincerely opposed to the destructive and lethal weapons which are employed to destroy their own maker, man or mankind.

In short, Tharchin's humble newspaper began to assert itself and make its own impact on the world opinion. (4)

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(4) It is interesting to note that the first Lepcha newspaper of 4-pages edited by Rev. Sitling was printed by the Litho process in Tharchin's Press (1930-31). Also the second Lepcha Primer composed by Rev. Sitling was printed by the same process in the same Press. The first Lepcha Primer was composed by a missionary who had it printed already in the Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta.

## CHAPTER 16

SECOND VISIT TO TIBET:—AN AUDIENCE WITH THE  
THIRTEENTH DALAI LAMA.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ....."

Romans 1 : 16

In August, 1927, Tharchin availed himself of another opportunity to visit the city of Lhasa. On this occasion he accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Odling and Mrs. Sheriff (1). The entourage went as far as Gyantse. Tharchin and his wife, however, proceeded farther as they were desirous of meeting his mother-in-law in Lhasa. Moreover, Tharchin entertained great hopes of meeting His Holiness the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and other high ranking Tibetan officials. He left Gyantse in the month of September, 1927, and after staying some time in Lhasa returned to Kalimpong in the month of March, 1928.

As expected Tharchins put up with the mother-in-law. Every one was very happy about this family reunion after a separation of three years. There were tears of joy and happiness at the first meeting of the near relatives and loved ones. There may have been also a tinge of sorrow and sadness, as is natural with the world, for sooner or later the company must part once again. Many gifts and

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(1) Former Miss. Graham, the youngest daughter of Dr. J.A. Graham.

presents had been carried from India to be offered to the mother-in-law and friends. Mrs. Tharchin had two younger sisters who were happy to meet the eldest sister "Acha", after such a long time. Her second sister's son, Rigzin Wangpo was also there as he preferred to live with his grandmother-"Mola" all the time. Indeed it was a blessed and joyful family reunion which as the world over was packed with deep emotion. Tharchin was specially happy as he expected to see several Tibetan officials, old friends and acquaintances who in the past had received and read his Tibetan newspaper. Some of the visitors came to his residence to pay their respects to him as they recognised and appreciated the original and lasting contribution of the Tibetan newspaper for the people of Tibet.

Prior to his departure from Kalimpong to Lhasa, Tharchin had already written a letter requesting an audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In the application he indicated his deep desire to pay his respects to His Holiness personally. In the letter he mentioned that in Lhasa he would be staying with his mother-in-law whose address was also stated.

During his stay in Lhasa Tharchin applied himself as much as possible in learning about Tibetan literature from the noted scholars. Especially, he devoted his time and energy to the study of

general characteristics and special peculiarities of Tibetan poetry and grammar. He read scientific works available in the field of prose and poetry, rhetoric and prosody. The textbook on poetry which he thoroughly mastered is still in his personal library. Now it might cost over Rs. 1000/-.

A few years back, a Russian named Notevitch (2) had written that he had received a book from one of their Buddhist temples in which it was stated that Jesus had gone to Tibet. At Lhasa Tharchin enquired if any such book was available in which the birth and the ministry of Christ Jesus were described. He approached a high ranking Tibetan official who did not have the book in his personal possession but knew of the gentleman who had a copy of it. He even arranged to secure it and handed it over to Tharchin who engaged a writer to copy this particular manuscript entitled, "Zamling Thagring Thongwe Durbina" which literally means a binocular to see the world from a long distance. Actually it was a book on the Geography of the world. Tharchin got it copied. The copyist took three months to write out the book. Tharchin arranged for his board and regular remuneration. Tharchin clarifies by pointing out that Chang Kya Ho Thog Thu an incarnate Lama who hailed from North-west China and who wrote this particular book on world

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(2) Also vide A. J. Appasamy's Sundar Singh, P. 45, Para 3.

Geography had drawn his information about the birth and ministry of Jesus from a certain Roman Catholic priest who made the statement about Christ, his crucifixion and resurrection and these statements were incorporated by the incarnate Lama in his book referred to above.

To continue the story, one day a person from the Dalai Lama's palace arrived carrying a message granting Tharchin a unique and much sought audience with His Holiness the next day. When the messenger brought the word Tharchin was out of doors. So the message was delivered to his mother-in-law to pass on to him. In the evening when he returned home he received the message and learned of the contents. Immediately he rushed to the residence of Doring Thaiji who advised him concerning the correct procedures to be observed while meeting His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He offered Tharchin his pony and a servant and further suggested that he consult the Commander in Chief of the Tibetan army who was one of the trusted officials of His Holiness.

Next day early in the morning Tharchin arrived at the home of the Commander in Chief as directed. His home was about one mile away from Lhasa town proper and Norbu Lingka, the summer palace of His Holiness. When Tharchin reached his home, the Commander was absorbed in his regular morning

worship. In the meanwhile Tharchin waited in the reception room.

The Commander instructed Tharchin as to the right gestures and procedures to be followed in the presence of His Holiness. Tharchin was asked about the presents to be offered to the Dalai Lama. He showed a beautifully packed tin of tiny biscuits and a solid gold watch which he was carrying on behalf of Rev. Polhill to be presented to His Holiness the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. The tin of biscuits was nicely covered and decorated with a lovely fancy wrapper. Tharchin was asked about the scarf(3). The Commander did not approve of the kind of scarf Tharchin was intending to offer. It was of an inferior quality. So the Commander gave another scarf from his personal collection to Tharchin. In those days it cost Rs. 50/- now it might cost Rs. 200/- or even more. Tharchin explained that he would be unable to prostrate himself which the Commander understood very well and took it with good grace. Tharchin was excused from this ordeal in view of his Christian background which prohibited (4) any act of prostration before man or matter.

When Tharchin and his servant reached the gates of the palace, it was 8 O'clock in the morning.

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(3) According to Tibetan custom a silken scarf, instead of flower garlands, is offered as a mark of respect.

(4) Exodus 20 ; 3 - 5



They had to wait for sometime inside the gate. There were other Tibetan officials awaiting their turn to be interviewed. Every visitor was allowed five to ten minute audience with His Holiness. At last Tharchin's turn came and he was called in.

When he entered the reception hall, he noticed His Holiness sitting on the throne raised about one and a half feet above the floor. His Holiness was sitting in a cross-legged fashion, a common posture even in India. His Holiness was attired in a rich yellow robe. Tharchin saluted him in a military style. His Holiness nodded his head in acceptance of the greeting. He motioned Tharchin to sit down. Tharchin was sitting almost straight in front of His Holiness at a distance of five to six feet. Tharchin admits, "I dared not look here and there in the reception room except to look straight at the impressive countenance of the Dalai Lama. Beautifully designed woolen carpets were spread on the floor. The entire room conveyed an idea of contemplation and peacefulness."

Tharchin was asked routine questions regarding his arrival, the duration of residence and the time of departure. After this His Holiness asked him several questions on various phases of social and political life. His Holiness asked, "Who is the Viceroy of India?" Luckily Tharchin knew the name and replied, "Lord Irwin." Tharchin answered correctly

and pronounced the name rightly too. He says "Fortunately the name was on the tip of my tongue."

His Holiness told Tharchin, "I am pleased to know about the Tibetan newspaper which you have founded." Tharchin says, "The Dalai Lama encouraged me to continue to publish the newspaper to which I rather apologetically replied that the newspaper was not properly printed." His Holiness said, "Go on but do not give up." Thereafter the Dalai Lama enquired about the Panchen Lama who at that time was away in China. His Holiness evinced this interest particularly as he was anxious about the safety and return journey of the Panchen Lama. Another reason why the Dalai Lama happened to refer to the Panchen Lama was because Tharchin had published a series of articles about the Panchen Lama in his newspaper. Besides this, His Holiness also enquired about the civil war going on in China at that time.

On the whole His Holiness was openly expressive of his goodwill towards Tharchin who in return was very glad to have met His Holiness, the political monarch of Tibet. His Holiness was kind enough to grant Tharchin an interview of thirty minutes while other top-ranking officials were getting barely five to ten minutes. Tharchin remarks, "I believe this good gesture towards me was indicative of the Dalai Lama's admiration and appreciation of my

services and contribution through the Tibetan newspaper for the people of Tibet."

After the conversation was over, as per etiquette, tea was served by another Tibetan attendant who was the only faithful and favourite attendant of the Dalai Lama. His name was Kuchar Kunphela. One third of a cup of tea was poured in a Chinese porcelin. According to custom Tharchin acknowledged the offer but declined it with thanks. Then in a round basket Tibetan cakes and Khapses were brought in but Tharchin declined these politely and thankfully. When Tharchin came out, he was surprised to find that all the offerings which he had declined inside with courtesy had been handed over to his attendant awaiting him at the gate. Many people who were standing at the entrance desired to have a share or portion of those preparations which they, believed were infused with the special blessings of His Holiness.

According to the letter which Tharchin had despatched from Kalimpong, permission was sought by Tharchin to study under an erudite and renowned Lama who was engaged in the task of the revision of the Kangyur, (5) the canonical Scriptures of

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(5) Kangyur is called "Tri-Pithika" in Sanskrit. It contains the teachings of Buddha in hundred and eight volumes. Tengyur is a general commentary containing knowledge of several sciences such as Art, Grammar, Poetry, Astronomy and Medicine etc.

Buddhism. Tharchin hoped to reside in the same compound and take lessons from the learned Lama. As His Holiness was not pleased with this Lama, he, that is, the Lama had to move away to some other place. His Holiness enquired of Tharchin whether or not he was studying under the Lama referred to above. Tharchin wisely replied, "As the place of that Lama is far away I am not going to study under him. Instead I am taking lessons from another Lama in Lhasa city itself."

When asked to convey his impressions Tharchin replied, "His Holiness the thirteenth Dalai Lama had a very attractive personality. His eyes were forceful and penetrating. The great virtue of simplicity was written on his face. He was a wise, kind-hearted, broad-minded and far-sighted person." At the conclusion of the interview Tharchin saluted him again in a military style and moved slowly backwards without showing his back to the great Man of Tibet.

Tharchin claims that the Dalai Lama read his newspaper carefully and minutely. One need not doubt or question the veracity of this statement. In his newspaper Tharchin regularly published the current prices of items such as wool which was a good source of annual income for Tibet. Those days a monopoly of wool was entrusted to a particular trader.

On one occasion His Holiness noticed that a price-list of wool submitted by a Government wool-trader for a particular month differed from the price-list published by Tharchin in his Tibetan monthly newspaper. Immediately His Holiness called for an explanation from the trader concerned.

Since the Tibetan Government had taken over the wool trade, the general wool merchants began to lose their source of income. Hence they began to export sheep by the thousands of thousands to India, which was unprecedented in the history of wool trade. Although the sheep were being sold very cheap, still there were no buyers and so the traders began to kill the sheep and sell the meat (even cheaper than beef) from house to house.

Tharchin published this matter in his newspaper under the heading "Mutton is selling cheaper than beef" and another heading "Wool-selling and sheep-selling". He pointed out that if sheep which is the source of wool is killed then a day will come when there will be no sheep which means there will be no wool trade. As soon as His Holiness read these articles he ordered immediately that no single sheep along the border of India and Tibet should cross the boundary. This incident showed that His Holiness read the Tibetan newspaper very carefully and acted promptly whenever a measure was required in the greater interest of the country.

At the end of 1932 His Holiness sent a gift of Rs. 20/- for Tharchin's newspaper for the second time. Failing to receive an immediate acknowledgment, His Holiness despatched a telegram (1933) to Tharchin to acknowledge the receipt of Rs. 20/- by a return telegram. Accordingly, Tharchin promptly sent a telegram and thanked His Holiness for the timely gift. As a matter of fact, Tharchin was unable to write a letter of acknowledgment as during those days he was ailing in the local hospital. Tharchin thinks, "This goodwill gesture of monetary gift was demonstrative of Dalai Lama's love and concern for me personally. Ten days after the gift and telegram, His Holiness passed away. I was one of the few persons who heard of the sad news first. Right about this time Sir Charles Bell the Political Officer was intending to proceed to Tibet. When the news of Dalai Lama's death was first conveyed to Sir Charles Bell, he did not believe it at all. When the news was finally confirmed through the post and telegraph department, the political officer's face suddenly changed and he was grief-stricken as he had very high regards for His Holiness the thirteenth Dalai Lama."

At Lhasa Tharchin bade goodbye to officials and friends and took the return journey. They had a permit from the Lhasa Government instructing the local headman at different stages to supply ponies for riding

and luggage. At third stage from Gyantse to Phari it so happened that the local headman supplied a bad riding pony which began to kick back very nastily. The servant was thrown away and the saddle was tilted. The half of the sword came out of the sheath and the pony went on kicking against the edge of the sword until it cut the nerves of his hind leg. With great difficulty they stopped the pony from kicking against the sword. There was an altercation over the damage done to the pony. At last the price of Rs. 120/- was fixed for the pony out of which Rs. 60/- was paid by Tharchin and the rest was to be paid by the owner. Thus the owner took away the pony.

On the return journey ten or twelve persons, mostly, Tharchin's mother-in-law and other near relatives came together with him to Kalimpong. Here the party spent one full year. During this long interval Tharchin's relatives got many opportunities to attend the Sunday church services and thus hear about the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They learned about the redeeming love of God expressed in the crucifixion being vindicated by the resurrection of Christ.

Tharchin reached Kalimpong two months prior to the arrival of Dr. Knox. With reference to his loved ones Tharchin comments, "From Lhasa we came back in a great joyful company. I believe my relatives

were inwardly convinced of the truth of Christianity. I even believe that they accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. Of course they were not initiated into the Christian Faith by baptism just because they were intending to return to Tibet within a very short while."





